Queer Sword & Sorcery

DEFY THE GODS

CHRYS SELLERS

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This book describes a game whose players tell stories about mythical characters. All characters and events portrayed herein are fictional. Any resemblance to real people or events is purely coincidental.

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Kuliana to the sorcerer:

Make me a woman.

Give her eyes like stars. Cheeks like glowing apples, lips like figs, breasts like two dancing gazelles, hips like a bowl full of wine. Give her a voice like a songbird. Place wings on her feet that she may dance with gladness.

Replied the sorcerer—not without sympathy:

I will make you a woman. But my art has no neat channels. It floods. Here is what I foresee:

You will have eyes like a branch lit at both ends. Cheeks like heated bronze, lips like an open wound, breasts like two halves of an onion, and hips like a chariot full of salt. You will have a voice like a thunderclap.

And after, I will place a sword in your hands, that you may know no peace nor captivity.

from The Epic of Kuliana (fragment 1)

The lost oracles say the world began with Chaos.

Nothing was up or down, good or evil. All was pure possibility.

Then Mother Chaos birthed the Pantheon of immortals. Because they were first born, they decided: This is right. That is wrong.

Using Chaos as their wet clay, they sculpted an abundant, sun-baked world. Muddy river valleys, reed marshes, primeval forests, and rocky islands bent around a vast, central sea. They smoothed over its rough edges, decorated it with creatures. They baked it hard into a series of domains they could rule.

Then the Pantheon wrought their masterwork, their own first born, the Atlanteans—mortals with subtle minds and bodies.

But these ever-curious children found the cracks in the world between the Pantheon's domains and saw Chaos flickering there. They turned it into sorcery, threatening the Pantheon's cherished order—for which the Pantheon annihilated them. An age passed.

Now, in the age of humans, the Pantheon wants nothing from us lesser mortals but obedience. They bless the pious, prosperous, and powerful. But they revile you and me.

Will we huddle together in fear, to die embracing? Or will we seize immortal glory and usurp the world's jeweled thrones?

IN THE BEGINNING

CHAPTER

Introducing the Game

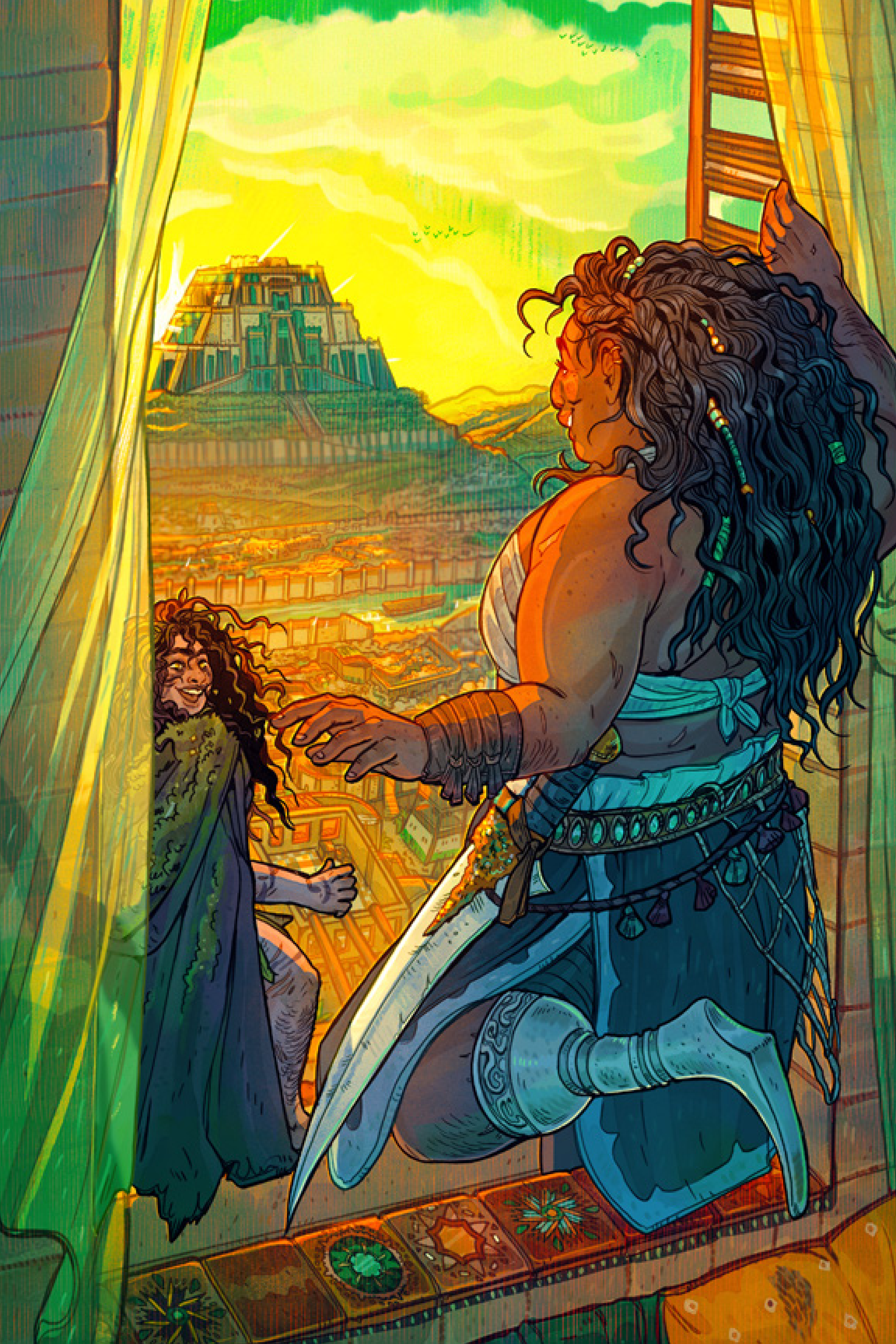
What Is This Book?

Defy the Gods is a guidebook for telling stories. With this book and your friends, you can spin yarns of daring adventure, messy romance, and treacherous power.

Defy the Gods is an adventure game. You play out the stories of people who rely on their swords, wits, and special talents to survive. Encounter gigantic creatures and the ever-present Atlantean past. Confront dark fates. Withstand the gods' wrath. Over and over, choose to remain human and vulnerable or let power transform you.

Defy the Gods is a romance. As enigmatic as the world around you is the landscape of your own heart, and those of your friends. Charm enemies. Risk falling in love. Entangle yourself in a web of relationships. Here, kisses cut deeper than steel.

Defy the Gods is an ancient Mesopotamian fantasy. At the dawn of writing, in a land both new and old, life is made of fired clay and cast bronze. Travel by chariot and galley. Find knowledge on clay tablets. The realm of the dead lies just beneath your feet, and gods walk among you.



Defy the Gods is a queer game. Your adventurers live on the outskirts of society. The gods hate them, the City grinds them down, but their love for each other sustains them. They love without limits. Like real-life queer people, they are outsiders with illegal bodies or illicit loves, battling both civilization and supernatural censure. Whether *you*, dear player, are queer or not, queer themes can enrich your sword & sorcery story.

Defy the Gods holds up a sorcerous, silver mirror so you can see yourself in it, see yourself differently, and step through into a world as new and familiar as a recurring dream. One where you and your friends belong.

The Basics

This is a role-playing game—that is, a game where you make up a thrilling story with your friends. It's the kind of game where nobody loses, even though the characters in your story may die or become monsters. You win by setting up your friends to narrate great moments.

At important moments, the game pauses your storytelling, so you can roll dice or make a choice. These moments of chance or fateful decisions point your story in interesting directions.

You'll need 3–5 players to play, and 2–3 hours for the first session. Later sessions are likely to be longer. The game typically takes 4 to 12 sessions. You also need at least 2 six-sided dice, preferably a pair for each of you. You'll also want pencils and print-outs of the play sheets—get them from https://defythegodsrpg.com.

Games Master and Players

One of you plays the **Games Master**, also called the **GM**. The GM sets the scene, plays all the **side characters**, and presents conflicts for the adventurers to overcome. They also make sure everyone else gets spotlight time equally.

For brevity's sake, we refer to the non-GM players simply as **the players**. Each player takes on the life of one of the story's main characters, called **adventurers**. They say what their adventurer thinks, feels, says, and does.

Each player gets a **playbook**. The playbook provides options for who the adventurer is and what they look like. It also lists many actions, called moves, that they may do in crucial moments. Some moves are available to every player; some are unique to each playbook.

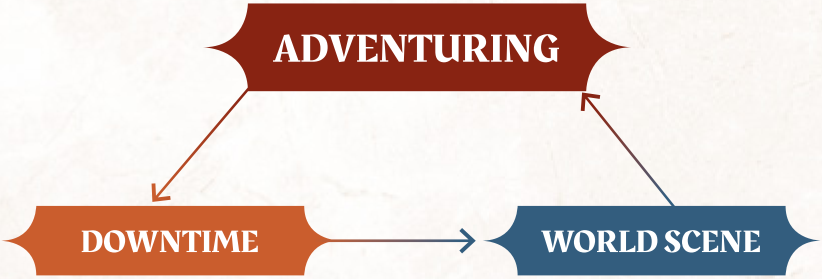
You all—GM and players alike—take responsibility for setting the tone, being a fan of each others' characters, and taking care of each other.

Overview of Play

1. The game starts with "Session Zero," in which:
    a. The GM explains the rules.
    b. Everyone agrees on safety tools and boundaries.
    c. The players create adventurers, forge relationships, and build the world.
    d. The players narrate their first World Scene.
2. Then, the game takes on this rhythm:
    a. **Adventure:** The GM presents difficulties, and the players try to overcome them. This is the main mode of play. It might take one session or a few.
    b. **Downtime:** The time scale zooms out, and the players describe what the adventurers do between adventures.
    c. **World Scene:** The players pick a World Force and play a scene as some of its members. This points to further story hooks for the GM to use.
    d. Back to another Adventure.

3. At the end of each session, answer the XP questions on your playbook. If you reached your Crisis this session, change one Epithet to reflect the trauma (see Epithets and Crisis below).

If you want to zip through Session Zero and play an adventure all in one session, you can use the prebuilt adventure (see page 210).



The World Forces

You start in a City that you define—an independent city-state. It's home, even if its authorities don't always make it feel that way. The laws of the City grind you down, leaving no space for you to live, but it's not personal. The unofficial communities in the City offer sanctuary and fellowship, but they are at least as stressed as you and may reach out to *you* for help.

Surrounding the City are the Wilds—the province of creatures, a category that includes both the mundane and the fantastical, such as lions, stags, manticores, and sphinxes. The Wilds are a perilous place, where it's easy to misstep into danger or offend opaque animal customs. Somewhere past their trackless expanse lie other Cities.

Scattered in desolate places throughout the Wilds are the remnants of the previous mortal civilization, Atlantis. Its ruined metropolises and structures contain the Atlanteans' gift—sorcery—in the form of scrolls, treacherous artifacts, and an obscure legacy.

This entire Mortal Realm is a thin, flat plane. Above it, in the heavens, is the Immortal Realm—abode of the Pantheon. Each member of the Pantheon, whether god, goddess, or demon, has

their own domains where they rule supreme. The Pantheon has strict ideas of what is good, and you are not part of it. If you do not change your ways, the Pantheon will not hesitate to destroy you.

Beneath the Mortal Realm is the Underworld, ruled by Death and inhabited by the shades of all who have died before. Death separates you from your loved ones, haunts you with their memory, and mocks your attempts to forge lasting human connection.

The Palette Grid

Defy the Gods invites you to tell stories with romance, seduction, gory violence, tyranny, bigotry, religious violence, and body horror. These potential topics make it especially important to get consensus on what subjects your table will explore. Several of these topics might be uncomfortable but still interesting.

By agreeing to get on the same page about everyone's boundaries, you show mutual respect and build trust. That lets you take the story in interesting directions while still being good to each other. You don't have to always get it right from the beginning. But you do have to try, improve, and above all show that you care about your fellow players' wishes.

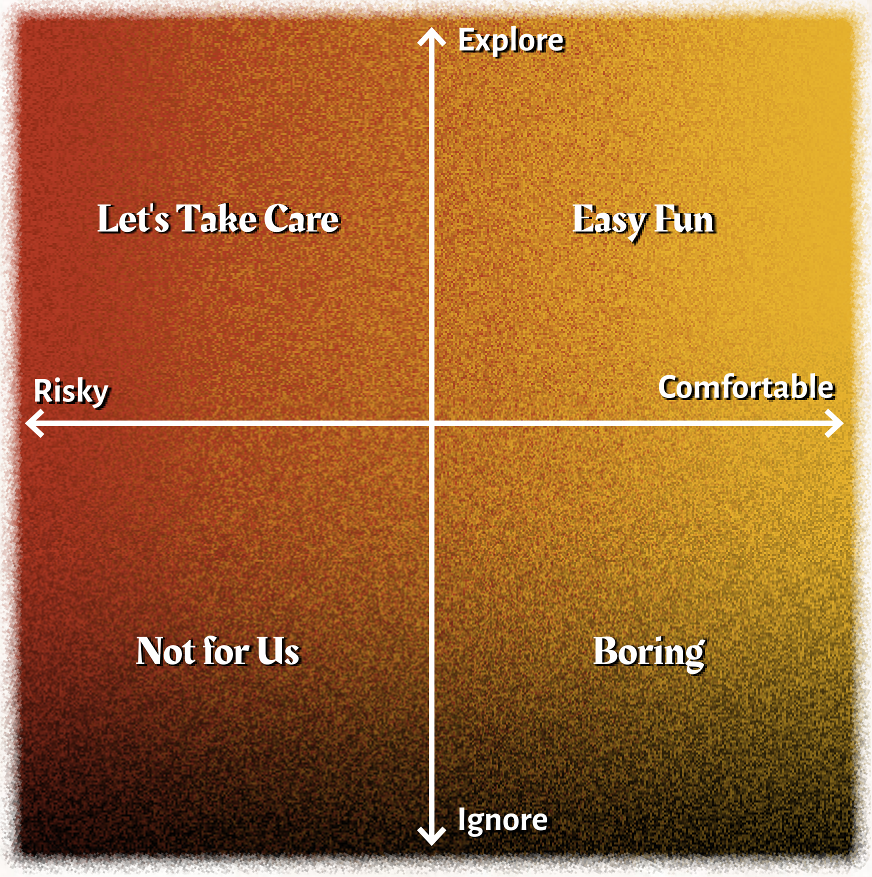
Setting Boundaries

To get consensus on everyone's boundaries, this game borrows the Palette Grid from Jay Dragon's game ***Seven-Part Pact***. Fold a piece of paper in half. Then fold it in half the other way, so you have four quadrants. (Or print out the Palette Grid that's in this game's play sheets.)

The X-axis, left-to-right, is how easy a topic is: "Risky" on the left and "Comfortable" on the right. The Y-axis, top-to-bottom, is how much you all want to engage with a topic: "Explore" at the top and "Ignore" at the bottom.

Going clockwise:

- The top-right quadrant is **Easy Fun**: comfortable topics that you all want to explore in play. For instance, "I want to fight a giant snake," or "I'd love to explore parallel worlds."
- Bottom-right is **Boring**: things that aren't risky, just bland; not where you want to take the game. You may not even think to put anything here, which is fine.
- Bottom-left is **Not for Us**: difficult topics that we don't want to explore. Anything that anyone puts here, you should leave out. By default, this game puts slavery, torture, and sexual assault here. But you may think of others: "I don't want children to be harmed in this game, even threatened with harm," or "I really can't handle spiders or other bugs, especially giant ones." And my list may not be your list, because—
- Top-left is **Let's Take Care**. These are difficult, risky topics that you all *want* to explore. They might be things that would be terrible if encountered in real life, but fun in the context of a violent ancient-world fantasy story. Discuss how you all want to treat each topic when you include it, and why. How seriously do you want to portray it? What are you not excited to portray? When you do include it, **check in** often, both during and after, and be **open to feedback**. The aforementioned gory violence, tyranny, bigotry, religious violence, and body horror may go in "Let's Take Care," but really it depends how you all feel about each one.



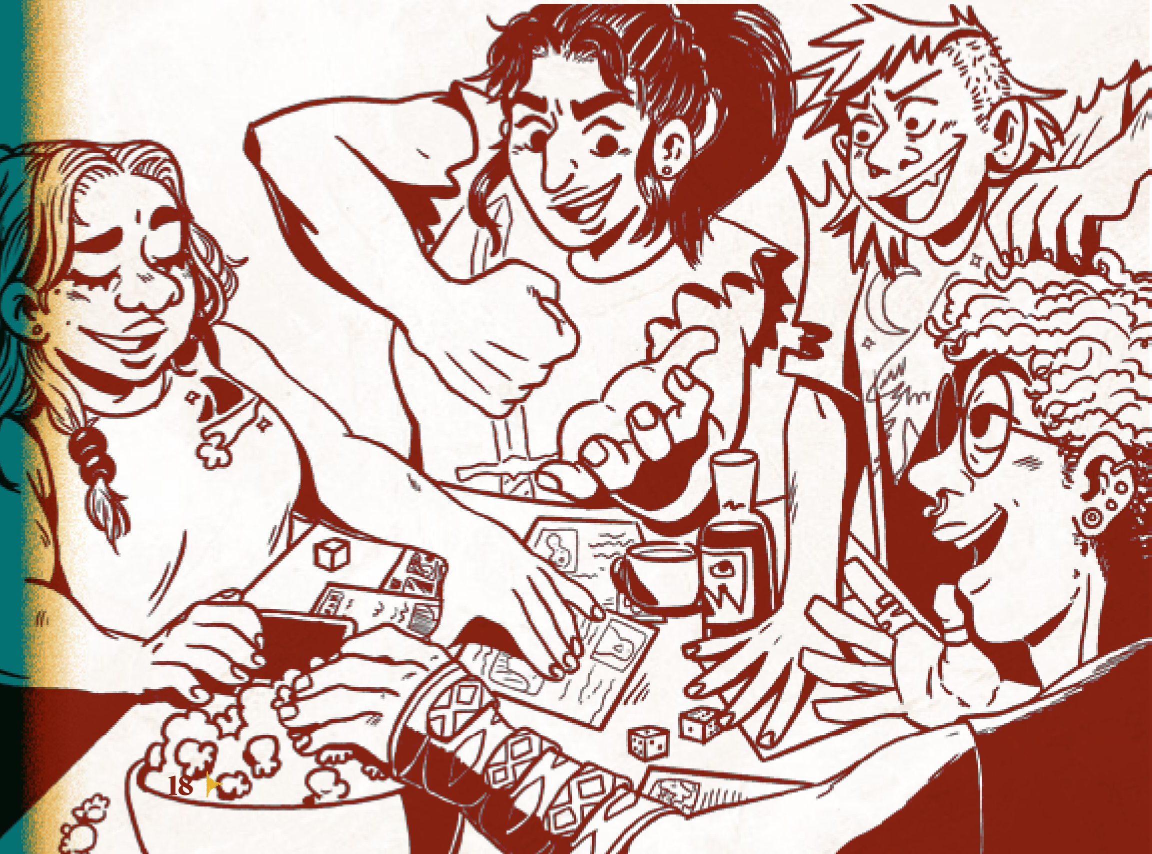
Go around the table and give everyone at the table a chance to contribute. For each topic that someone adds, ask if everyone agrees about where on the grid to put it. Discuss, be honest, and solicit honesty from each other. If you can't agree, try breaking the topic down into more specific topics that can go in different places on the grid. "Kissing" may go in a different place than "sexual situations," which may be different than "sex."

If you still have irreconcilable disagreements, step back and think about what you want to do, or even whether this is the game you all want to play. If not, that's okay—better to find out now, not after you get in an argument in the middle of the game that surprises everyone. You all are more important than the game.

The grid has nuance. You all may be just as enthusiastic about portraying "flirtation," "romantic betrayal," and "involuntary attraction," but may put "flirtation" in Easy Fun, "romantic betrayal" just over the line into Let's Take Care, and "involuntary attraction" way to the left in Let's Take Care. This lets you handle them differently.

When you all agree on a topic, write it in the correct place on the grid. Use pencil—you all may want to move it later. Keep the grid out where anyone can check it.

It's hard to know ahead of time everything you do or don't want in your game. So, continue the conversation while you play. If you decide you're no longer okay with exploring something, let everyone know you want to move it to Not for Us. Or maybe you object to the way an in-bounds topic was depicted, or someone takes the story in a direction you had no idea you wouldn't like until just that moment. You always have a voice. And the game offers rewards at end-of-session for moving a topic on the grid.



Calibrate Your Oppression

This is a good time to calibrate how literal you want the anti-queer oppression to be. That is, why do the Pantheon and the City hate you, and how much is it tied to who you love or how you do gender? The three modes are:

Deep Allegory: They hate you for dabbling in sorcery, being raised by animals, etc. These are all ways of being different, but their similarity to queerness ends there, and the hatred you get has nothing to do with whether you're queer. This is the default mode.

Thin Veil: They hate you for dabbling in sorcery or being raised by animals. However, for various societal reasons, only queer people do those things, so they've become shorthand for queerness.

Out In the Open: They hate you for being queer, and they say as much. The fact that you dabble in sorcery or were raised by animals is, at most, secondary to your queerness.

Finally, Keep It Close to Home

This world is its own thing. It's not "the East," that surprisingly durable fantasy that "the West" has woven about everything other than itself. The GM's section Playing the World (see page 178) has more details. However, keeping it close to home is something everyone, not just the GM, can participate in.

Resist the urge to imagine a world of forbidden pleasures and sadistic cruelty, or "exotic" lands and peoples. Instead, imagine yourself in this City: It's home. No matter how familiar you make it, this game will ensure you have wild experiences regardless.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

CHAPTER

II

The Core Rules

Making a Move

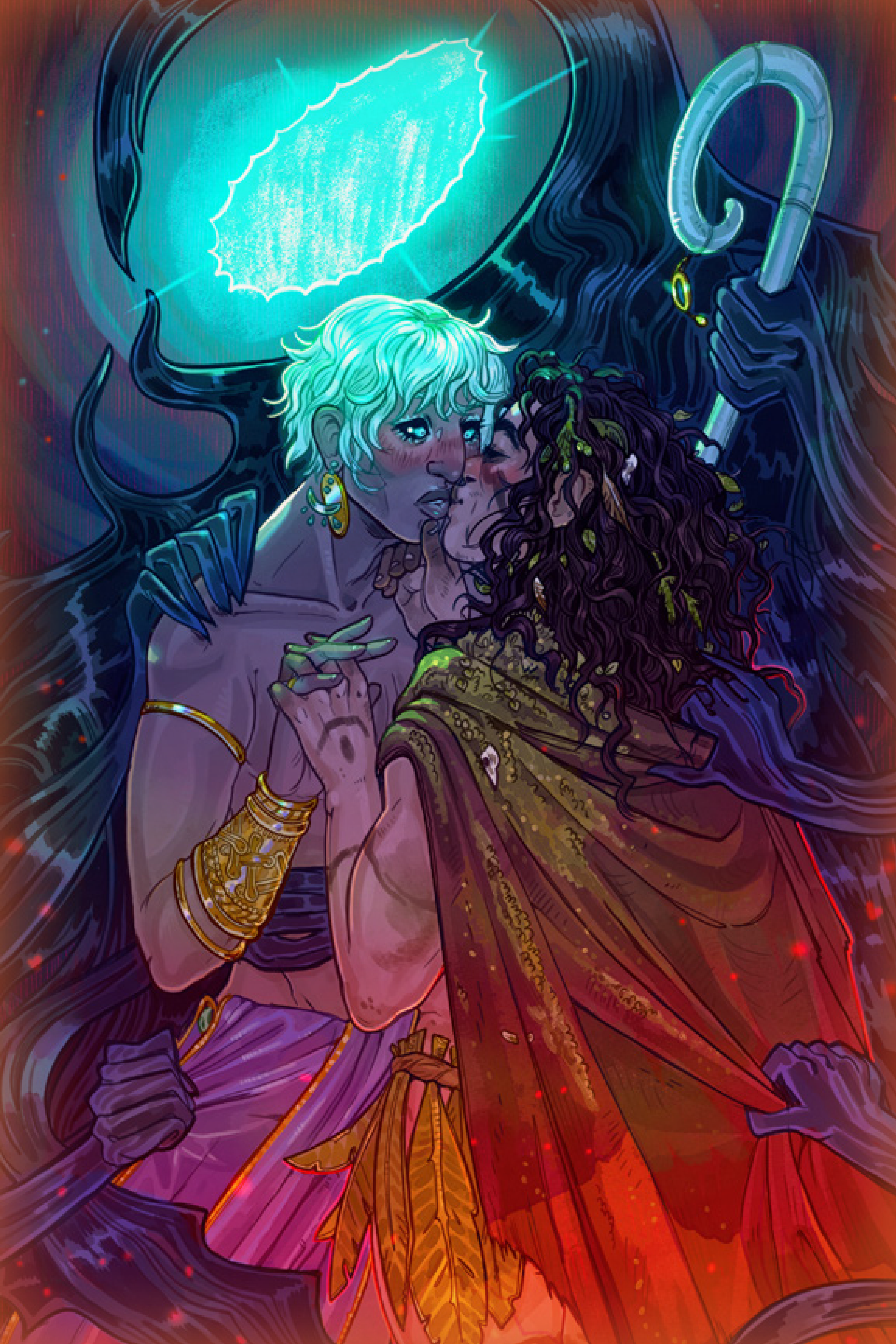
Playing ***Defy the Gods*** mostly consists of having a conversation: The GM describes what happens in the world, one or more of the players describe their adventurer's response, the GM describes the consequences, and you all continue.

However, sometimes the outcome is uncertain, the stakes are high, or an adventurer comes face to face with their doom. Then, the rules tell you to pause the conversation and roll dice or choose between difficult options. This is called **making a move**.

When you make a move, your adventurer has the spotlight; everything else in the story pauses until your move is resolved.

Your move may then set off other moves—your own or someone else's. Once all the triggered moves are resolved, the conversation continues in its normal, freeform way.

Every player has access to the **basic moves**, and each playbook contains more specific **playbook moves** related to that playbook's themes.



To Make a Move, Trigger It in the Story

Every move specifies the conditions that activate it—its trigger. When you narrate the trigger into the story, then the move happens, and its mechanical effects follow. The move can't happen without this narrative trigger.

If you want to make a move and get its mechanical effects, you have to introduce something into the story to trigger it. For example, the trigger for the **Entice** move is: "When you appeal to someone's physical or emotional sensibilities…." If you say your adventurer is flirting with someone, you trigger the move. If you say you want to trigger the move so you can get all its juicy benefits, the GM may say, "What does that look like?" Your adventurer has to flirt with or otherwise charm another character.

Stating the player's intention and clearly linking an in-character action any time a move is triggered keeps the story flowing; it helps the GM and the other players visualize what is happening and how the story changes.

Rolling Dice

Most moves tell you to pick one of your Epithets—special phrases that describe your adventurer—then roll two six-sided dice. This is called "invoke an Epithet and roll." You sum the two dice and add the Epithet's worth, which is a number between -1 and +5. This gives you your result:

- **7 or less** is a miss. You don't get what you want, but an interesting complication happens. You also mark 1 XP (experience point).
- **8–10** is a glowing success. You get what you want.
- **11 or more** is a burning success. You get more than you bargained for. You may have to mark Fire.

Malika is playing Melem, the Sailor, and she's about to make a move. She chooses to invoke her Epithet, "who seeks out the unknown," which is worth +3. She rolls two dice and gets a 3 and a 5. Together with her Epithet, this totals 11, which is a burning success.

Whatever the result, it always pushes the story forward. Even a miss changes the story; it's never as boring as just "you fail."

Dice Are for Players

Only players roll dice. The GM has several moves they can make (see page 160), but they are more like suggestions for where to take the story. The GM decides on a move that fits the current scene, and it happens.

"There's No Move for This"

When you want to do something, but there isn't a move that fits, you may still be able to do it. Just say what it is.

The GM may assign a mechanical cost. Or they may ask you to go ahead and describe it in a freeform way. Or they may say it doesn't fit, for whatever reason.

When there isn't a move for what you want to do, it simply means it's not close enough to the themes of the game or your playbook that you have specific mechanics for it. Sometimes that means it's not appropriate to the story. But you don't need a move's permission to do something—just agreement from your fellow players.

Anything that isn't a move is part of the conversation.

Epithets

An Epithet—pronounced "EPPY-thet"—is a phrase that reflects your adventurer's values, principles, and reputation. Side characters have them, too.

Your Adventurer's Epithets

An adventurer's Epithets are **succinct, double-edged descriptions of how they act**. The section "How to Write an Epithet" in "Creating Your Adventurers" (see page 61) has more details about this definition.

When a move tells you to "invoke an Epithet and roll," you pick an Epithet that describes how you're making the move and add its worth to your roll. This Epithet is the aspect of your reputation that you're laying on the line for this move.

At game start, Epithets are worth at least +0 and no more than +2. When you max out your XP Track (see XP and Advancement on page 33), you can increase the worth of an Epithet or add a new Epithet worth +0. An Epithet worth +0 is more likely to result in a miss, but sometimes it's the one that best describes how you're acting. An Epithet worth +3 is equally likely to result in a glowing success or a burning success.

You start with three Epithets and gain more as you play. The more Epithets you have, the longer you'll be able to play your adventurer. This is because, over time, you will replace your Epithets with **Dooms**: a special kind of Epithet described later.

Malika wants her Sailor, Melem, to be bold and spicy. She chooses the Epithets "who thirsts for the unknown," "who flirts readily with anyone," and "who never stops coming up with plans." Knowing that Epithets can figure in misses as well as burning successes, Malika has made Melem a bit of a disaster—someone who may get caught up in their own schemes. She assigns the Epithets a worth of +2, +1, and +0, respectively.

Side Characters' Epithets

Named side characters also have Epithets. However, their Epithets don't have any worth. Each Epithet describes some way that the side character acts in the world. The more significant a side character is to the story, the more Epithets they have:

0 Epithets: Anonymous enemies—like ghouls, animated skeletons, and soldiers—have no Epithets. They are defeated after taking 1 Wound, with excess Wounds spilling over to the next 0-Epithet enemy, if one is nearby.

1–2 Epithets: A side character who shows up once in the story or who blocks a minor goal typically has 1 or 2 Epithets. They may have a name, or they may be identified only by their function in the scene.

3–4 Epithets: A named side character who recurs in the story or offers significant opposition typically has 3 or 4 Epithets. They usually have a relationship with at least one of the adventurers, preferably two.

4–5 Epithets: A formidable, named side character who aids or opposes the adventurers' main goal in the current story arc typically has 4–5 Epithets. They usually have a relationship with two, three, or more adventurers.

The adventurers are facing off against Gashur, a powerful necromancer who used to love Melem. He has 4 Epithets: "who commands the dead," "who holds the key to the Underworld's gates," "who speaks icy truths," and "who has forgotten mercy."

Gashur has a faithful acolyte, Dagan, who wants to learn the secrets of necromancy but will settle for being Gashur's enforcer. She has only 2 Epithets: "who has no pity for weakness" and "who thirsts for Gashur's approval."

Gashur also raises skeletons to fight the adventurers. Each skeleton has 0 Epithets. They attack in packs, which makes it easy for Wounds to spill over from one to the next.

Wounds

Your adventurers' setbacks are measured in **Wounds**. Wounds modify Epithets and can be physical or emotional.

When the GM or a move's result tells you to "mark a Wound," tick the **"Wounded"** box under the Epithet that you just invoked. If you didn't just invoke an Epithet, or if that Epithet is already Wounded, pick the one that seems most appropriate for what's happening in the story.

When an Epithet is Wounded, its worth changes to -1. It's not worth 1 less than normal, but rather a *flat value* of -1. If, for some reason, you need to invoke this Epithet for a move, you will roll 2d6 and subtract 1 from the total.

You may also Wound an Epithet by failing to live up to it. You, the GM, or another player may call out when they think this has happened.

When the result of a single move directs you to mark 2 or more Wounds, assign each Wound to a different Epithet, picking the ones that seem most appropriate.

While fighting Gashur the necromancer, Malika rolled a miss, and it resulted in Melem, her Sailor, taking 2 Wounds. She has three Epithets: "who thirsts for the unknown" (worth +2), "who flirts readily with anyone" (worth +1), and "who never stops coming up with plans" (worth +0).

She decides that Gashur has humbled Melem's sense of her own cleverness, so she Wounds "who never stops coming up with plans," making it temporarily worth -1. Malika also says, "Melem still has a thing for Gashur, but it's clear that Gashur now loves only Death. This has daunted Melem's normally flirtatious nature." She Wounds "who flirts readily with anyone."

Now she has just one Epithet to invoke that's likely to succeed, but at least it's the one worth +2: "who thirsts for the unknown."

Some moves tell you to "take Wounds as directed." This usually means you mark 1 Wound. However, when fighting a powerful side character, like a giant creature or a god, you may need to mark 2 or 3 Wounds as the result of a single move. For this reason, it's good to wait until you have more than 3 Epithets before taking on a World Force directly. The GM should signpost clearly how dangerous an enemy is before you make a fighting move.

Crisis

When you Wound all your Epithets, you have reached your limits and entered **Crisis**. You have taken more punishment from the World than you can handle, and it's about to leave a mark. It's only right to recognize the moment.

Each playbook's Crisis is different. Read the description aloud, then play out the moment with the help of the GM and the other players. It is up to the table how long it takes. Rewrite one Epithet as your Crisis instructs. After you rewrite it, increase its worth by 1.

After you play out the Crisis, clear all your Wounds.

If the move that brings you into Crisis also maxes out your XP track, play the Crisis first before taking an Advancement. You must suffer before learning suffering's lesson.

Healing

There are three ways to unmark your Wounds:

- Clear all your Wounds during **Downtime** (see page 36) by choosing healing as one of your Downtime actions.
- Clear all your Wounds when you engage in your **Special Heart Move** (see the playbooks, starting page 66). Every playbook has a different Special Heart Move that requires a quiet moment. It clears all the Wounds of every adventurer involved.
- Mark all your Wounds and reach your Crisis (see above).

Your Special Heart Move is triggered by a moment of intimacy and calm. Intimacy can be a tumble together, a mutual recognition of trust, or some other shared experience. It could even be in the middle of the action, if you can take a quiet breath together. The briefer the moment, the more intense it needs to feel for your adventurers.

Wounding Side Characters

The same moves that Wound you may inflict Wounds on side characters. A side character's Epithets reflect their strengths; when you Wound a side character, the GM crosses out one of their Epithets.

You can Wound an enemy's Epithet by making a fighting move or by invalidating the Epithet in the story. For example, the palace's executioner may have the Epithet: "Who terrifies the people." If you make him look ridiculous and ineffectual, that Epithet is Wounded, and the executioner is one step closer to defeat.

When you cross out all of a side character's Epithets, they are defeated. You (the player who Wounded the side character's last Epithet) can decide if they are killed, unconscious, fleeing, or otherwise no longer a threat.

It takes 1 Wound to defeat an enemy with no Epithets. Such enemies usually attack in a group. When you inflict more than 1 Wound on a 0-Epithet enemy, the excess Wounds spill over to any 0-Epithet enemies beside them. In this way, a single, mighty blow may wipe out several mooks.

For more information on side characters' Epithets, see page 170.

Hearts

Hearts are something you collect from other people. They show how strongly those people feel about you, and how much sway you have over them as a result. They may be physically attracted to you, admire you, feel vulnerable with you, or even be hatefully obsessed. You may win Hearts from side characters or other adventurers. When you do, write the number of Hearts you have on your playbook sheet next to their name.

Writing down someone else's Heart means you're the one who has the advantage. The person who feels strongly about you and "gives" you their Heart doesn't write anything on their sheet.

Hearts are a currency you can spend. You spend them to make the **Influence** move—support the person whose Heart it is, undermine them, or tempt them to do what you want.

Whenever you feel yourself falling for someone, or when a move tells you to, make the **Give Your Heart** move. The GM or other players may give you their Hearts freely, or you may make the **Entice** move, winning their Hearts despite themselves.

When a side character has one of your Hearts, the side character (through the GM) can try to **Influence** you, too.

More information about all these moves is in "The Basic Moves" section (see page 42).

Malika has 2 Hearts from Ashme, the Sword, who is played by Alex. This means that Ashme cares what Melem (Malika's Sailor) thinks about her. In this case, Alex says it's because Melem has a tricksy way with words that Ashme lacks—and that, for reasons she doesn't understand, makes her swoon. In the Hearts section of Malika's playbook sheet, Malika writes a 2 with Ashme's name next to it.

What About Wounds?

It may seem like Hearts undercut the more direct way of defeating enemies, by Wounding them. If you can just **Entice** an enemy into giving you what you want, do you even need to fight them?

This is by design. When you convince someone to stand by you instead of with a World Force—even if it's merely because they're hot for you—you have created a relationship. A strong enough web of relationships can rival even the power of the gods.

Put another way: when you live under oppression, your emotional connections are a form of resistance.

Bestowed Epithets

When you get 4 Hearts from someone, your adventurer has a special insight into theirs and you may propose a new Epithet for them. If they accept the Epithet you propose, they write it in their playbook. See the **Name Me** move for more details. Since more Epithets let you play your adventurer longer, accepting a bestowed Epithet is powerful.

Fire

Fire represents your indomitable pride. In the face of immortal gods, such pride may be hubris. But it is yours.

Certain moves tell you to mark Fire, indicating that your spirit is blazing bright. When they do, mark 1 box on your Fire Track. This is usually because you rolled a result of 11 or more—a burning success.

When you fill your Fire Track, your pride has caught the notice of one or more of the World Forces. Make the **Defy the Gods** move (see page 54) to find out what happens. Depending on the result, you may be humiliated, stand defiantly, or rise up as a godlike being yourself for just a moment—and advance toward your Doom.

Doom

A Doom is a special kind of Epithet—a mark of how much immortal power you have seized for yourself. Your Dooms describe the inhuman, selfish, monstrously powerful version of yourself—and the coming end of your story. Dooms are a way to overcome the World Forces you oppose … by *becoming one of them*.

You gain a new Doom when you roll a burning success on the **Defy the Gods** move. Pick a new Doom Move from your playbook—or, if all those are taken, from another playbook.

Each Doom Move says what Doom you take. By design, these allow for less player flexibility than regular Epithets do. If you want to change it, discuss it with the GM.

A Doom always replaces one of your regular Epithets. This represents your power eclipsing your humanity. Pick which regular Epithet to efface. Write the new Doom in its place, and give it a worth of **+3**. Unless it is limited by a Wound, a Doom can never be worth less than +3. Place a mark next to the "Doom" label underneath the Epithet.

If you recall that someone else gave you the regular Epithet you're losing, discard all the Hearts you have from them, as you lose any sway you might have held over them. If a traumatic event gave you the Epithet, that trauma no longer defines you.

You can invoke a Doom just like an Epithet. Like an Epithet, a Doom describes a way that you act—physically or emotionally—and it is double-edged. It reflects one facet of your emerging immortality.

The more Epithets you have, the more Dooms you can take before ending your story. You gain Epithets with the **Name Me** move (see page 51).

When you eclipse your last Epithet with a Doom, it's the end. You haven't died, but you have finally destroyed your own humanity. Hand the adventurer sheet to the GM to use as an antagonist—a powerful World Force alongside all the others.

XP and Advancement

Whenever you roll a miss, mark 1 box on your XP track ("mark XP" for short). This shows how you learn from setbacks. When you fill your XP track, clear the track. Then choose one of the following:

Advancements

- Take a new playbook move. If you have taken all your available moves, take a move from another playbook. Playbook moves increase what your adventurer can do.
- Increase an Epithet's worth by +1, to a maximum worth of +3. Or, increase a Doom's worth by +1, to a maximum worth of +5. The more an Epithet is worth, the less likely you are to roll a miss—although burning successes also become more likely.
- Give yourself a new Epithet, worth +0. The more Epithets you have, the longer you'll be able to play your adventurer. You can have up to 5 Epithets.

Malika rolled a miss on her last move, so she marks XP. This fills her track. She clears the track. For her advance, she chooses to add a new Epithet, "who dips their words in honey." She gives it a worth of +0.

Ending the Session

At the end of each game session, each player takes these steps:

1. Answer your XP questions. Mark 1 XP for each question you answer yes. This rewards you for engaging with your playbook's themes.
2. If you reached your Crisis in this session, rewrite one of your Epithets and increase its worth by 1. Coming up with a new Epithet on the fly is hard, so give yourself some time between sessions to think of a new one that reflects your trauma and how your Crisis changed you. See "How to Write an Epithet" on page 61.
3. Give out **Stars** and **Wishes**. Stars and Wishes are a common tool in story games. Give a Star to someone for a moment you particularly loved. Although you may feel like everyone was awesome and want Stars for all, pick just one person (not yourself) to give a Star. You may also pass; you still get to offer a Wish.

   A Wish may be mild—something you're looking forward to. But it's also a chance to check in: Did anything happen this session that you'd rather not see more of? Did something *not* happen that you want to make sure to get to next time? If so, share it with the group. You may also pass.

4. Review the Palette Grid. After everyone has done Stars and Wishes, take a look at the Grid and offer suggestions. Decide if you all want to write anything new on the Grid, move something to a slightly different place, or move it to a new quadrant completely. Pay attention to what people said they wanted to see more or less of in Stars and Wishes; that may be an indication that the Palette needs to shift.

   If anyone adds or moves anything, *everyone* marks 1 XP. Mark 1 XP total, not 1 for each item.

5. Finally, if you maxed out your XP track, clear your track and take an Advancement, as described above.

It's the end of the session. Alex, Kerry, Malika, and Tomás mark XP as they answer their playbooks' specific questions. Nobody reached their Crisis this session, so nobody has to rewrite an Epithet. Then, they go around the table with Stars and Wishes:

Malika starts. She says, "Everyone was great, but I want to give my Star to Tomás (who plays Tahara the Sorcerer). That moment where you cast Metamorphosis and turned yourself into a bee was priceless."

"Bees can go all kinds of places!" Tomás says.

They go around the table. Alex, Tomás, and Kerry each offer a Star. Jean, the GM, doesn't want to play favorites and chooses to pass.

Then they start doing Wishes. Malika says, "I'd like to go after everyone else."

Alex says, "I'd like to fight a giant snake. It's in Easy Fun in our Palette Grid, and we're four sessions in and it hasn't happened yet."

"Next session will be full of giant snakes!" exclaims Jean. Everyone laughs uneasily, not sure just what "full of" means.

Tomás says, "I like the combat, but I want to see more situations where we talk to side characters. I think that could add good roleplay moments." Jean takes notes.

Kerry says, "As the Wolfling, I like being a fish out of water, but we don't need to roleplay all the actual awful things that City-dwellers say about Kamil. Can we please leave out anti-animal insults?" Malika agrees. This leads to a discussion, with the result that "fantasy slurs" goes in "Not for Us" on the Palette Grid, just left of the Y-axis but pretty far below the X-axis.

Malika says, "I'd also like to ask for more breaks to stretch and get some water." There's general agreement. It's not a topic, but it affects play, so Jean adds "Bio breaks" to the Easy Fun part of the Palette.

Because Kerry and Malika added things to the Palette, everyone marks 1 more XP.

End of Session Checklist

1. Answer your XP questions.
2. If you reached your Crisis, choose one Epithet to change. Increase its worth by 1.
3. Stars and Wishes.
4. Review the Palette Grid. If anyone adds or moves anything, everyone marks 1 XP.
5. If you max out your XP Track, take an Advancement.

Downtime and the World Scene

In between adventures—which might be after one session or several—the time scale zooms out, during which the adventurers take stock and separate for a while. After describing this, the players act out a World Scene.

Downtime

Individually, each player chooses two Downtime Actions. Describe how they play out, and adjust your adventurer's attributes accordingly. The available Downtime Actions are:

- Repair or rekindle a relationship. Describe how, then give them 1 Heart and/or request 1 from them.
- Learn something about yourself. Describe how you practice your craft, then mark 1 XP.
- Take time to heal. Describe how you avoid excitement, then clear all your Wounds.
- Reconnect with your simple humanity. Describe how you ground yourself, then unmark 1 Fire.

The World Scene

The World Scene is an interlude in which the players flip the script and briefly play the antagonists. It foreshadows what the world has in store for the adventurers, allowing the players to signal to the GM what challenges they want to encounter.

1. First, the players **choose a World Force** to narrate: pick from the Pantheon, the City, the Wilds, the Legacy of Atlantis, or Death. If a former adventurer has become a World Force, you may choose them as well.
2. Next, the players **decide what question** the scene should answer. The GM should listen to the players and help them reach a decision. The question should touch on the adventurers' lives directly or indirectly—their actions, perceived loyalties, anticipated next moves, or a threat they haven't encountered yet.

3. Based on the question, the GM frames the scene, proposing who (in general) is in it and where it takes place. If the players have strong opinions, go with it; this is when they get to tell the GM what they want to see more of. The GM will retake control once the interlude is over.
   For example:
   - *The rulers of the City and their courtiers meet in the palace map room and ask: How do we legislate away the adventurers' community?*
   - *Several accountants of the Thieves' Guild whisper in a lamplit corner: Our accounts are dangerously low. Who owes us money?*
   - *In the Wilds, normally hostile animal princes hold a parley at a sacred spring to decide: Can we forge an alliance to destroy the humans living nearby?*
   - *In the Underworld, shades of your lost loved ones huddle around a glowing ember of a hitherto unnarrated memory to murmur: How can we change this for all of them?*
   - *Eons ago, in a workshop in an Atlantean tower, scientists labor over a grand spell or clockwork that asks, implicitly: What will set this going in your time to change the world?*
   - *The Pantheon gathers around the grand stage of the world to hold a council and determine: How shall we make these infernal adventurers pay for their pride?*
4. Then, each player chooses a character related to the World Force. They begin a scene centered around the question. The GM can prompt the players and introduce new elements or events in response to the players' narration.
5. The GM ends the scene when the characters have answered the question: that is, when they know what to do or what will happen next.

The best World Scenes don't say specifically what immediate threats they produce. This gives the GM license to interpret the scene, and it preserves tension for the players.

It's time for a World Scene. Alex, Kerry, Malika, and Tomás start by choosing a World Force to represent. Alex wants to be the City's rulers, and Tomás wants to show creatures of Atlantean sorcery, but Kerry and Malika want to see what the Pantheon is up to, and the others agree.

Next, they discuss what question to build the scene around. Malika says, "Maybe the Pantheon foresees all the trouble the adventurers could cause, and they want to destroy them before it can happen."

Kerry says, "I like them more fallible. What if they've lost something, and they want to find it before the adventurers do?"

"Oh, that's good!" Tomás says. "An ancient artifact that could destroy them?"

There's general agreement. Jean, the GM, articulates the question: "How will the Pantheon stop the mortals from acquiring a fearsome, lost artifact?" without saying what the artifact is.

Jean looks at the list of Pantheon members and makes sure each player has a member to play.

Jean says the Pantheon isn't on speaking terms with each other, so the players start the scene in an abandoned palace, where the Pantheon used to meet regularly before their falling out.

Alex is playing Anzu, goddess of light and color. They say, "I go around and light all the braziers before the others arrive. I want to cheer this place up."

Malika, as Messana, the demon of shadows, says, "Every light casts a shadow. I slink out from the dark side of a pillar and hiss at Anzu."

Kerry is playing Kusarikku, the goddess of beauty. Tomás is Uttu, god of tyranny. Both make their entrances. Tomás offers his idea of what the object is: "We should have retrieved the Atlanteans' scepter before we destroyed them. But we were too hasty, and we scattered all their works across the earth."

Kerry "yes-ands" this: "Anyone who finds it could claim the Atlanteans' old throne."

"And all the powers it conveys," says Malika. "But how do we know the scepter still exists?"

Alex replies, "It came to me in a dream. I saw it, in a cave. But I don't know where the cave is."

Kerry says, "If it came to you in a dream, it could appear in the mortals' dreams, too." Then, out of character, "Wait, who's the god of dreams, again?"

Jean leans in: "Nobody picked that domain when we made the Pantheon. But you could say there's a fifth god, who disappeared a long time ago, who was god or goddess of dreams."

"I love that!" Tomás says. Then, after looking up the available names of deities, he says as Uttu, "Let us find Emesh, goddess of dreams, and convince her to show us the scepter's location, while sowing false dreams in the mortals' minds. Then *we'll* find the scepter, and the mortals will find only confusion."

The group likes this. They converse a bit more as their immortal characters, establishing that their mutual dislike stems from the last time they all saw Emesh, and how they left her.

Soon, though, Jean says, "Let's end the scene there. You established what the Pantheon lost, and you answered your question about what its members will do to keep the mortals from finding it. Let's find out what your adventurers are up to!"

After a bio break, the group gets back together. The players play their adventurers. Jean is the one who'll play the Pantheon members—when they eventually show themselves.

How It All Fits Together

As you make moves, you will sometimes roll misses and sometimes burning successes. The misses give you XP and sometimes Wounds, and the burning successes sometimes give you Fire.

When you max out your XP, you do one of three things:

- Improve an Epithet's worth, which makes glowing successes and (eventually) burning successes more likely.
- Add a new Epithet, which extends your adventurer's story by giving you more Epithets that you could overwrite with Dooms.
- Add a new playbook move, which rounds out your adventurer.

When you max out your Fire, you roll to **Defy the Gods**. This is likely to give you a new Doom, making your adventurer very powerful but also drawing them further upward toward becoming a monster.

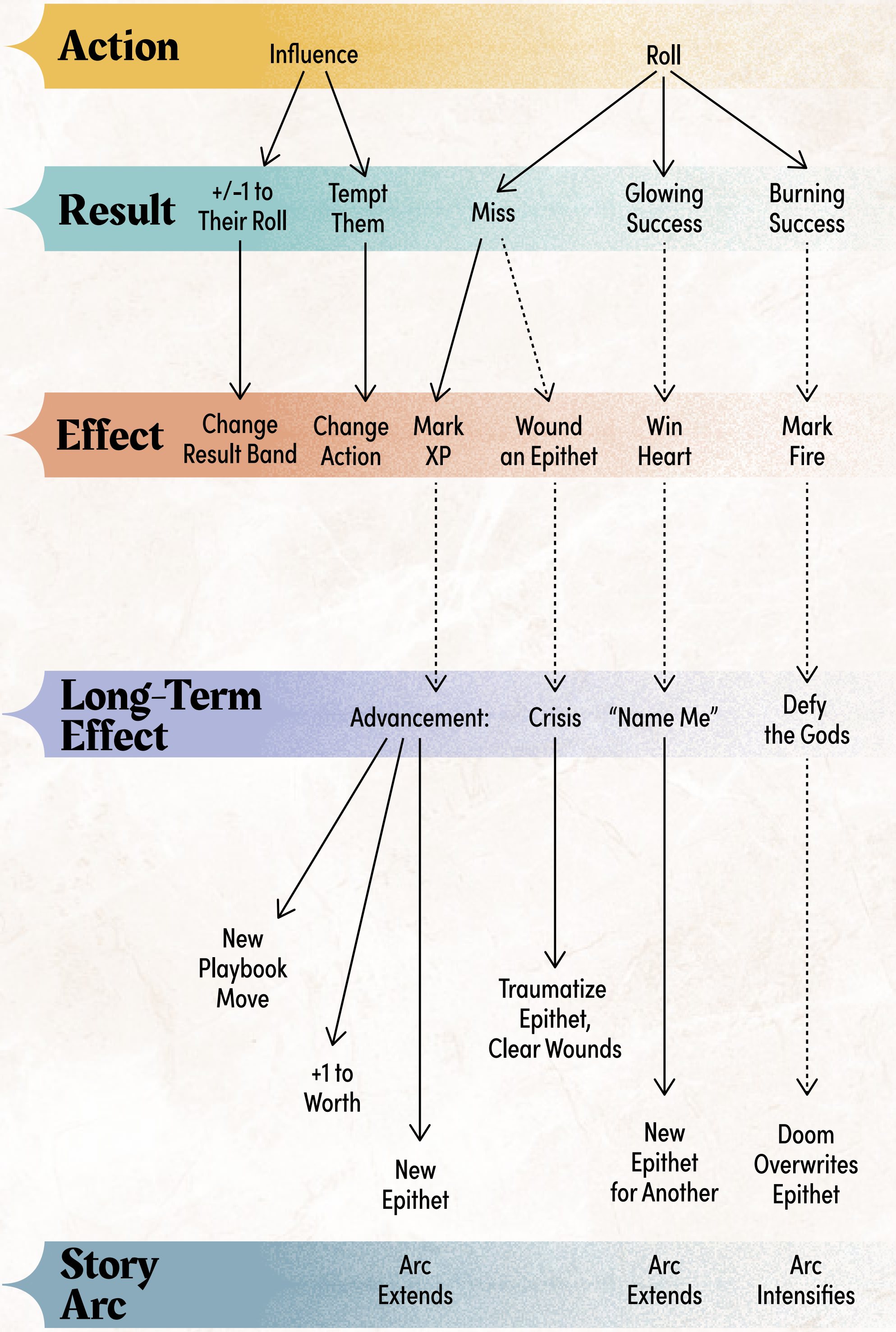
The Hearts you give to others—or that they win from you—may sometimes rescue you from misses and burning successes, but only if the players who hold them choose to help you. They may choose to keep them for themselves to use as social leverage.

You may use the Hearts that you win from your enemies to end a fight early or turn them into an ally.

There are three modes of play:

- Adventuring. This is normal play, where you narrate a series of scenes.
- Downtime. Time passes, and your adventurers go their own ways.
- The World Scene. The players flip the script and play members of a World Force.

After the World Scene, you return to adventuring.


Action
Influence
Roll
Result
+/-1 to Their Roll
Tempt Them
Miss
Glowing Success
Burning Success
Effect
Change Result Band
Change Action
Mark XP
Wound an Epithet
Win Heart
Mark Fire
Long-Term Effect
Advancement:
Crisis
"Name Me"
Defy the Gods
New Playbook Move
+1 to Worth
New Epithet
Traumatize Epithet, Clear Wounds
New Epithet for Another
Doom Overwrites Epithet
Story Arc
Arc Extends
Arc Extends
Arc Intensifies

CHAPTER III

The Basic Moves

All adventurers have access to these moves from the start. They come in three categories:

Moves of Might and Cunning: Four general adventuring moves for overcoming obstacles loudly or quietly, searching unfamiliar places and things, and learning more about a person.

Heart Moves: Four social moves for winning someone's interest, swaying someone whose interest you hold, falling for someone willingly, and facing the profound moment when you know someone better than they know themself.

Immortal Moves: Two show-stoppers. The first describes the great cost of summoning a World Force and begging it for assistance. The second describes the climactic moment when you dare to defy a World Force's will, and how it forever changes you, your relationship with your friends, and the World Force.

Moves of Might and Cunning

BOLT

When you want to move openly, energetically, or forcefully—running, leaping, or overcoming an obstacle—invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you get where you wanted to go, unharmed and ready for what's next; or you vault past the obstacle.

On an 11+: you get there, but choose 1:

- You endanger a friend. The GM will say who takes Wounds, if anyone.
- You sow chaos or destruction. Mark Fire.
- You overshoot your mark or are confronted with a new obstacle.

The GM will say what else happens as a result.
On a 7 or less: you stumble or fall short. Prepare for the worst.

When you want to move somewhere or get something and you're doing it in the open, but you're not primarily trying to Wound someone, you want to **Bolt**. This applies equally to leaping across a chasm, rushing to get somewhere first, getting out of somewhere before the guards catch up to you, confronting a cheat in a game of chance, or barging down a door.

On a burning success, you get where you wanted or do what you intended, but you have been careless or overly energetic in your efforts, and someone or something will be worse off as a result.

Together with **Finesse**, this move covers all adventurous moments worth rolling for that don't have their own move. Sometimes, when a moment doesn't trigger any specific move, it's a sign the moment is so tangential to the game's themes that it doesn't require a roll at all. You or the GM could just say whether you succeed or not. However, ***Defy the Gods*** is full of risk, and risk demands a move, even when it's not specific. For that, you have **Bolt** and **Finesse**.

FINESSE

When you want to move carefully or discreetly—manipulating something tricky, stepping silently, or overcoming an obstacle—invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: you get or do what you wanted, with no one the wiser.

On an 11+: your curiosity, greed, or ambition has gotten the better of you. Mark Fire. You reach too far or find more than you wanted; the GM will say how.

On a 7 or less: you fumble and someone notices. Maybe you alert the City Watch or a drop of your sweat wakes up a giant snake. Prepare for the worst.

When you want to move somewhere or get something, and you're doing it quietly or carefully, you are trying to **Finesse**. This applies equally to cutting a purse, palming a valuable object, infiltrating somewhere undetected, persuading a mean drunk to leave the room, or playing a flute.

On a burning success, you get where you wanted or do what you intended, but you get or do more than that, too. You may simply do the thing *too well*, with unintended consequences. It's up to the GM to say what that looks like.

Together with **Bolt**, this move covers all adventurous moments worth rolling for that don't have their own move. Sometimes, when a moment doesn't trigger any specific move, it's a sign the moment is so tangential to the game's themes that it doesn't require a roll at all. You or the GM could just say whether you succeed or not. However, ***Defy the Gods*** is full of risk, and risk demands a move, even when it's not specific. For that, you have **Bolt** and **Finesse**.

EXPLORE

When you seek your way in a perilous place or examine a strange object, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: ask the GM 2:

- "Where is the best way to go from here?"
- "What is dangerous here?"
- "What does this thing do?"
- "What is valuable here?"
- "What are others missing here?"
- "What here can I use to ________?"

On an 11+: ask the GM 2 above and 1 below:

- "Who gets hurt at my expense?" If you are not sorry, mark Fire.
- "How do I damage what I'm exploring?"
- "How do my actions arouse or intensify the danger here?" You feel a kinship with the danger; mark Fire.

On a 7 or less: ask 1, but you get lost, trapped, or lose something crucial. Prepare for the worst.

The Explore move is for finding your way or examining object. If the object of your fascination is a person, roll to **Figure Out a Person**.

Some questions are more appropriate for an object than a place, and vice versa, but they're versatile.

On a glowing success, you get to ask two questions, which the GM will answer fully and honestly. The ones you don't ask give the GM room to surprise you.

On a burning success, you are thoughtless and overly thorough in your exploration, damaging the object or your surroundings. Even if you're safe, you may have put your friends in danger.

FIGURE OUT A PERSON

When you want to learn more about a person, invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: ask the GM 1 below, +1 more for each Heart of theirs you spend:

- “What do they want?”
- “How do they feel toward ________?”
- “How could I get them to________?”
- “What do they love the most?”
- “How would they feel if I________?”

On an 11+: you learn too much. Ask 1 above, +1 more for each Heart you spend. Also ask 1 below:

- “What dangerous power has their Heart?”
- “Why do they see me as dangerous?” Mark Fire.
- “How do I fall in love with them or their cause?” Give them +1 Heart.

On a 7 or less: ask 1 question, but you reveal more than you wanted about yourself. They ask you 1 question above, +1 more for each Heart of yours they spend.

When you are interacting with someone, use **Figure Out a Person**. You usually aren’t asking these questions out loud: You could infer them from body language or you could pick up on a subtle clue in the room.

Regardless, on a **glowing success**, the GM should answer truthfully and as fully as they can; you earned it.

On a burning success, you’ve still earned the answer to one of those questions, but you get more: You either learn something that raises the stakes (learning about a dangerous power) or you affect the situation (inspiring fear in the person or falling in love with them). Expect the GM to make full use of these to change the scene.

On a miss, you still get the answer to a question, but seeking it has left you at a disadvantage. It’s up to the GM to tell you how, but it won’t be pretty.

Heart Moves

ENTICE

When you appeal to someone's physical or emotional sensibilities, invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: you attract their interest. Gain +1 Heart from them, and they choose 1:

- Get flustered and off-balance.
- Betray a World Force for your sake.
- Give in to their desire.

On an 11+: you get in over your head. Gain +1 Heart from them, and they choose 1 above and 1 below:

- You fall for them. They gain +1 Heart from you, too.
- You spark sublime passion. You both mark Fire.

On a 7 or less: your temptation falls flat, attracting a World Force's ire instead. The GM will say what else happens.

This is the main way you gain a Heart from someone, adventurers and side characters alike. You may make this move on any character, regardless of gender. What you stir in them, as determined by your dice roll, may change what they know about themselves.

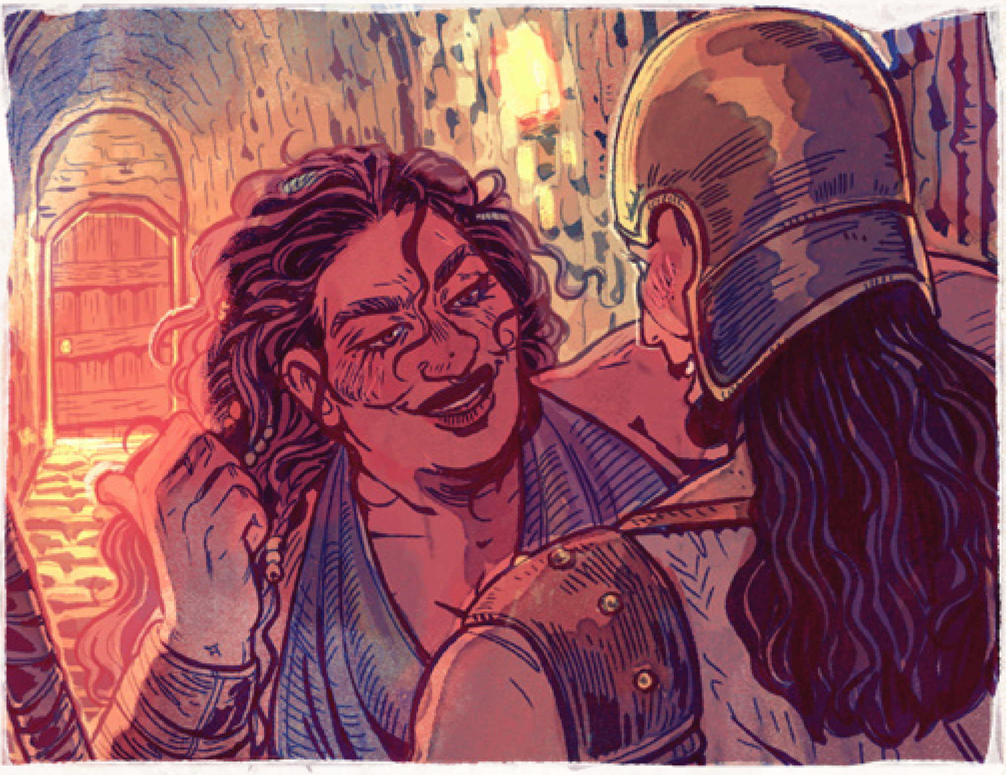
On a glowing success, you get to bank the Heart while also getting immediate leverage over them. It's up to the target character's player (or, for side characters, the GM) to decide what that leverage looks like.

In the choice "give in to their desire," it is up to the other player to say what their character desires. Allow for consent by giving them leeway in this and the other choices. You will still get the benefit of it.

On a burning success, the flirtation carries you away. The other person may demand a Heart. If they choose to mark Fire, it suggests your act of connection has challenged the World Forces, proudly defying their social mores. If you don't like the option the other person selects, you can forego gaining a Heart from their character, in which case the connection fizzles disappointingly. However, if you want that Heart, you must follow their lead: give up a Heart or mark Fire, as they choose.

A **miss** represents your flirting going awry in the worst possible way. You have transgressed a social boundary set by the Pantheon or the City's laws. The target of your enticement may take offense because they don't expect your kind of person to be making eyes at them. In the pitiless Wilds, where laws and taboos are less clear, the other person may not be ready for what you offer, or sudden danger may intervene. It is also always possible that the memory of a dead loved one reaches out from the Underworld to sour the moment for one or both of you.

However it happens, a World Force finds your actions abhorrent, and its representatives make you pay for it. The GM will say how it works, but it will be bad.



INFLUENCE

When you want to help, hinder, or sway someone, spend a Heart of theirs and pick 1:

- Tempt them to do something. If they accept, give them 1 XP. If they refuse, don't spend the Heart.
- Find out what it would take to get them to do what you want. For a side character, they may simply agree.
- Aid or thwart them. After they roll, adjust their result by +/-1.
- Get under their skin. Increase the result of your move against them by +1 after you roll.

When using this move on behalf of side characters who have Hearts on the adventurers, the GM picks from only the first two options.

This move requires no rolling. You already won the other person's Heart. Now you're reaping the benefits; simply spend the Heart to do so.

Some benefits are for the other person, such as improving their roll by 1 (up or down, as seems best to you). But most benefits are yours alone—persuade them to do what you want, find out what it might take to sway them, worsen their roll by 1 (in the direction that suits you), or push your move against them over the edge to a new result.

After a player has rolled, multiple players may make the **Influence** move to aid or thwart the roll, but each player may spend only 1 Heart to do so.

When you use this roll to aid or thwart the Sorcerer's spellcasting, you may change a pip on 1 of their dice by 1.

The GM uses this move too, on behalf of side characters. However, the GM should never spend a Heart to steal a player's success. Side characters may tempt the adventurers, or potentially squeeze knowledge from them, but not steal their victories.

GIVE YOUR HEART

When you admire someone or fall for them a little, give them 1 Heart.

This move requires no rolling. If you think an adventurer or side character is impressive or attractive, give them a Heart. The number of Hearts you may give is infinite, but limited to just 1 each time you trigger this move.

NAME ME

When you have 4 Hearts from someone, you get a special insight into them—something even they don't know. Now or at the end of the session, ask their player what it is, then offer them a new Epithet to reflect it.

They write the new Epithet in a blank Epithet slot. If they have no blank slots, they replace an existing Epithet. The new Epithet is worth +0. Reduce the Hearts of theirs that you have to 1.

This move requires no rolling. When you get a 4th Heart from someone, whether they're an adventurer or a side character, your adventurer gets an insight into theirs. If it's a side character, their player is the GM. The GM may make this move if a side character gets such an insight into an adventurer.

Even though this is something the character didn't know about themselves, their *player* gets to tell you what it is. Be patient, and let them decide what to offer you. Then you will get to shape the Epithet based on that input.

Immortal Moves

BESEECH A FORCE

When you reach for power beyond your grasp, call on a World Force—a Pantheon member, City authority, prince of the Wilds, Death, or legacy of Atlantis. Then, invoke an Epithet and roll. You may spend Hearts from someone allied with the World Force to adjust the roll by +/-1.

On an 8–10: the Force appears before you and aids you … for a price. Choose 1:

- Let it mold you. In place of the Epithet you invoked, write one that reflects the World Force's vision of you. Its worth remains the same. Take 1 Heart from a member or ally of the World Force as they sympathize with you more.
- The World Force demands your allegiance. Give 1 Heart to a member of the Force.
- Another price of the GM's choice.

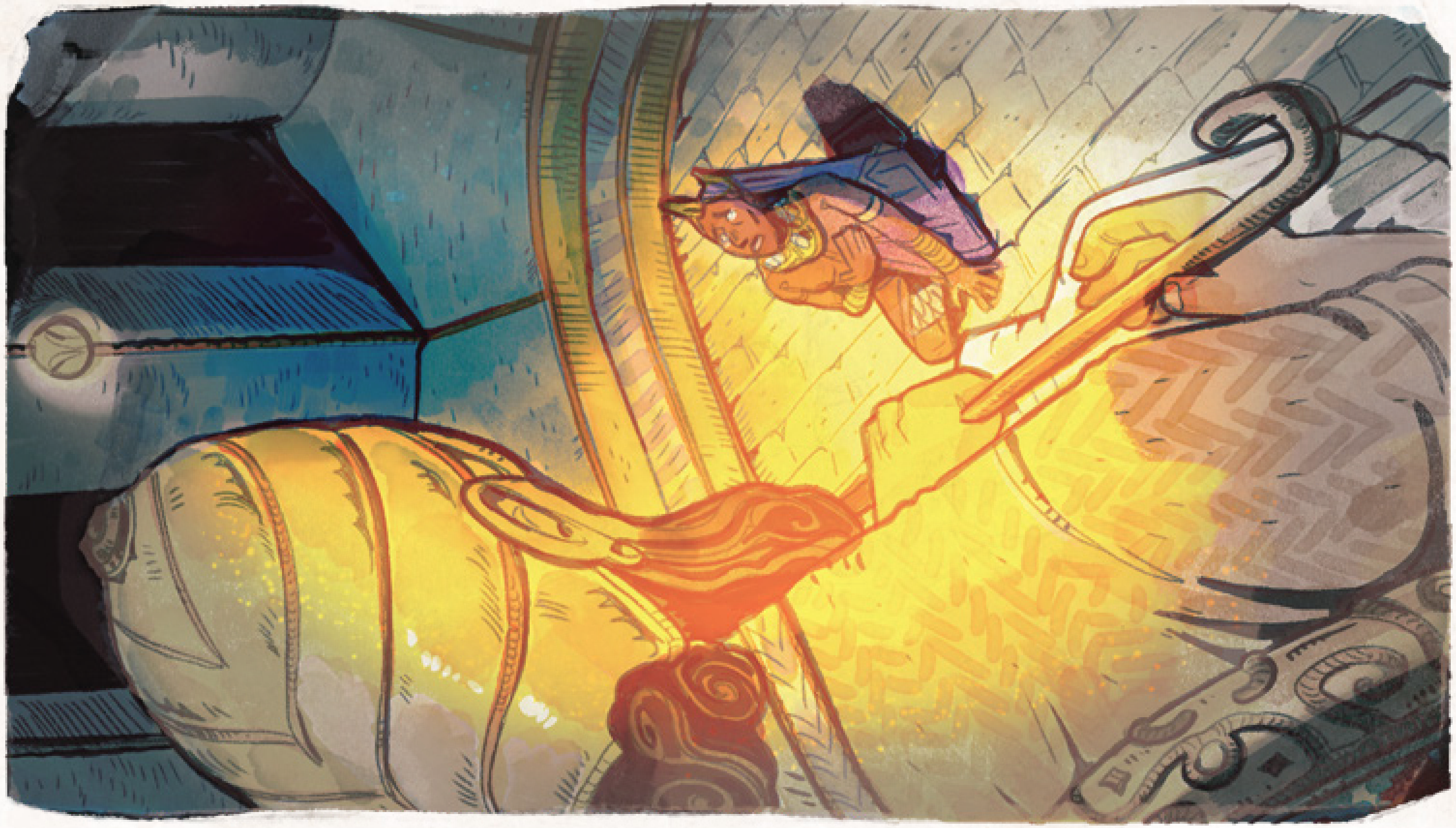
On an 11+: all that matters is power. You assume a monstrous aspect, and the Force recognizes itself in you. Mark Fire and give a member of the Force 1 Heart. The Force then serves your most ambitious, selfish, power-hungry wishes. Later, it will ask you to return the favor.

On a 7 or less: the Force intervenes, but as it pleases. Prepare for the worst.

Because of this move, there are no hard limits on what an adventurer may do in a scene. But it is likely to cost them.

On a glowing success, if you choose to let the Force mold you, it may take a while to think of a worthwhile Epithet. Feel free to make a note and come back to it at the end of the session.

You may only give Hearts to or win Hearts from a person (including an immortal) with whom you can connect intimately. When you give or take 1 Heart to or from a "member" or "ally" of the World Force, find a mortal or immortal who represents the Force or is closely aligned with it. They must be in the scene. If no one appropriate is, you and the GM should hold onto the Heart and give or take it when they appear.



DEFY THE GODS

When you deal a humiliating blow to a mighty World Force by filling your Fire Track or otherwise:

1. First, ask who among those present has 3 Fire marked and chooses to stand with you.
2. Then, roll 2d6 + Fire. Only those who stand with you may make the Influence move to adjust your result.

On an 8–10: you Wound the World Force you're defying, permanently invalidating one of their Epithets. Say how you stand proudly together. Then, you and all who stood with you do the following:

1. Lose your glory, returning to mere humanity: Clear your Fire Track.
2. Grow closer: Give 3 Hearts, spread as you like among those who stood with you. Take up to 3 Hearts in return, spread among all of them.
3. Grow and change. Rewrite one of your Epithets. Increase its worth by +1.

The World Force must give way, for now. But you have triggered a reaction move from them in a later scene.

On an 11+: you briefly take the place of the World Force, Wounding them and permanently invalidating one of their Epithets. Say how you rise to godlike power, spurning any being's commands. All who stood with you mark 1 Wound from being too near your glory. Then, you alone do the following:

1. Keep an ember of your glory: Set your Fire Track to 1.
2. Extend your power: Take a new Doom Move. If you already have all the ones from your playbook, take one from another playbook.
3. Become more monstrous: Overwrite an Epithet with the Doom specified in the Doom Move. Give it a worth of +3.
4. Ask each who stood with you how much your monstrous glory resonates with theirs, from 0 to 3. You now have that many Hearts of theirs. They gain none of yours.

The World Force must give way, for now. But you have triggered a reaction move from them in a later scene.

On a 7 or less: you make a feeble but personally meaningful gesture. The World Force exacts immediate vengeance for your insolence, humbling you and all who stood with you. The GM will say how. Then, you and all who stood with you do all the following:

1. Lose your glory, returning to mere humanity: Clear your Fire Track.
2. Suffer the World Force's punishment: You and all who stood with you take Wounds as directed.
3. Gain 1 Heart from each who stood with you.

When your glory threatens to outshine the fires of heaven and earth, make this move.

Although it's called **Defy the Gods**, this move applies equally when you challenge or humiliate *any* World Force: the Pantheon, the City authorities, the beast princes of the Wilds, the machinations of long-dead Atlanteans, or the inevitability of Death.

Unlike most moves, you do not invoke an Epithet and roll. Instead, you roll two dice and add the number of boxes marked on your Fire Track.

Don't feel like you have to complete your Fire Track to trigger this move. Players and GM alike should watch for a time when an adventurer embarrasses or humbles a significant representative of a World Force, inviting consequences.

This is a climactic move, and whatever triggers it is dramatic. All kinds of move results may max out your Fire Track and push you over the edge. When the move arises out of something relatively small, everyone at the table should see in this seemingly trivial moment something suddenly, unexpectedly profound. It is the pebble that starts an avalanche.

Defy the Gods has a lot of steps. More than any other move, it stops play until it's resolved, changing the story's course and coloring whatever comes after—for all the adventurers, not just the one who made the move.

Unlike other rolls, the only players who may make the **Influence** move on this roll are those who stand with you. Before you roll, they must:

- Be present in the scene.
- Have 3 Fire marked, to indicate they are glorious enough to join you in this moment.
- Agree to stand with you; to meet whatever comes.

When you stand in defiance of a major power, it's important to know who is by your side. They stand to benefit or suffer along with you.

On a glowing success, you and your stalwart friends are merely human, but that is enough to face down the representative of the World Force. Whether they be god or mortal, they must defer to you and probably withdraw from the scene. You or the GM may pick which Epithet of theirs you have invalidated with this moment. For a Pantheon member, this is one of their domains that they no longer control. For a City authority, it is one of the ways they maintain sway over their citizens.

You also grow closer with those who stood with you. Give out a total of 3 Hearts to one or more of those who stood with you, apportioned how you like. Take up to 3 Hearts total from one or more of those who stood with you, apportioned how they like. If this triggers the **Name Me** move, resolve it now or at the end of the session.

On a burning success, you alone benefit. Your friends are burned for standing with you. The Wound they take may be literal or metaphorical, but if nothing else, one of their Epithets seems pale and wan compared to your blazing glory.

Take a Doom Move, and overwrite one of your Epithets with the Doom that goes with it. You may especially embody the Doom in this moment. When you overwrite your last Epithet, your adventurer becomes a World Force, and you may not play them anymore.

Ask each person who stood with you how much your monstrously glorious aspect in this moment finds an answering call in them, from 0 to 3. That becomes the new number of Hearts that you have from that person. To be clear, you don't get that many *more* Hearts from them—that's the new total, and you may lose Hearts from them in this process.

On a miss, the World Force crushes you and those who stood with you. You take as many Wounds as the side character would have inflicted in a fighting move, from 1 to 3, and those who stood with you take 1 or more Wounds as well. Nevertheless, the adversity brings you all closer: You gain 1 Heart from them, and each of them wins 1 Heart from you. If this triggers the **Name Me** move, resolve it now or at the end of the session.

In addition to these basic moves that all adventurers can make, each playbook grants additional moves. Read about them in detail in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER

Beginning the Game

There are three parts to beginning the game: creating your adventurers, building the world, and answering relationship questions.

Create Your Adventurers

Overview

1. Pick a playbook and fill out the pick-list questions at the top.
2. Pick your Epithets and assign their worth.
3. Pick your starting playbook moves.
4. Introduce your adventurers to each other.

Pick a Playbook

The six playbooks are:

- The **Revenant**: a fugitive from the Underworld who is trying to embrace their new life
- The **Sailor**: a well-traveled, mischievous flirt who always has a plan
- The **Sorcerer**: a lonely scholar of the forbidden art who warps themself and others
- The **Sword**: a big-hearted person whose violence both solves and causes problems

- The **Vessel**: the submissive lover of a minor immortal who is imbued with transcendent power
- The **Wolfling**: a human raised by creatures of the Wilds who is trying to learn where they fit in

To get a quick sense of each one, look at their suggested Epithets, their Special Heart Move, and their first playbook move. You may also want to read the "Playing the…" section at the end of each playbook.

After you've chosen a playbook, fill out the descriptors at the top by picking one word or phrase from each list or substituting your own answer.

Pick Your Epithets

Pick three Epithets from the list of suggestions. After more experience, you may want to write your own (see sidebar).

Decide What Your Epithets Are Worth

At game start, give your three Epithets a worth of +0, +1, and +2, in any order. The greater the worth, the more central it is to your adventurer's sense of themself or their reputation.

Pick Your Moves and Introduce Your Adventurers

Pick your starting playbook moves, in addition to the ones already picked for you. The Sorcerer and the Vessel work a little differently—the Sorcerer picks spells, and the Vessel picks Miracles. To start, two or three have been picked for you.

Next, go around the table and introduce your adventurers to each other. Read out your name, pronouns, gender, the rest of your pick lists, and the Epithets you chose.

Now you have adventurers, but they don't yet have relationships with each other or the world. To make those relationships, you need to build the world.

HOW TO WRITE AN EPITHET

Some Epithets are better written than others. A good Epithet is three things:

- It describes **a principle or belief that your adventurer holds**.
- It describes **how you act**.
- It is **stated clearly**.

DECLARE A PRINCIPLE OR BELIEF

An Epithet describes something your adventurer believes in. It doesn't need to be something you, the player, agree with; it can even regularly cause problems for your adventurer.

Because it's a belief or principle, it describes how they *should* act or *want to* act. Something purely descriptive, like "who makes plans," doesn't work as well as "who never stops coming up with plans."

Importantly, it should be something that, at times, your adventurer can fail to uphold. That allows for an Epithet to be Wounded and opens up role-playing possibilities. Despite being phrased as a blanket statement, "who never stops coming up with plans" will sometimes be proven false; at times, your adventurer will be at their wits' end and give up planning.

Absolute terms like "who will always," "everything," and "everyone" help present things as a principle or belief.

DESCRIBE HOW YOU ACT

An Epithet needs to apply to your moves, so it should describe how you *do* things: how you fight, run, sneak, argue, learn information, or charm someone; how you move the story forward. So, "who believes everything can be negotiated" is fine; it certainly describes a principle or belief. But it would make a better Epithet to put it into *action*: "who never passes up a chance to negotiate." Make Epithets active.

Some Epithets can be about how your adventurer acts in relationships or emotional situations, so long as you also have at least one—preferably two—others that describe how you navigate more physical situations.

STATE IT CLEARLY

Finally, make it clear what the Epithet means. Make it concrete enough to apply to actual moves. The Epithet "who reads deeply into things" is hard to picture happening. You'll be more likely to use it if you say "who refuses to be satisfied with simple answers."

Less importantly, the ideal Epithet is written like something you could tack on at the end of your adventurer's name, in the style of ancient epics. That's why most of them start with "who."

Build the World

Overview

By default, it's the players' job to build the world, not the GM's. The GM facilitates the process and keeps it moving.

1. Define the Pantheon of gods.
2. Build the City.
3. Choose the creatures and landscapes of the Wilds you want to see.
4. Describe Atlantis, its works, and why it fell.
5. Describe Death and the Underworld.

Learn more about the World Forces on page 132 and get the worksheets at https://defythegodsrpg.com

The Pantheon

The Pantheon is an assembly of demons, spirits, and gods of many genders. All power in the world of ***Defy the Gods*** ultimately flows from the Pantheon.

The Pantheon is haughty, jealous, and manipulative; comfortable in their own power but fearful of any possible threats to it. Its members may feud with each other. While they may be related by blood or marriage, these ties do not necessarily create familial warmth.

Each member of the Pantheon has four domains: areas of the world under their rule. Some domains overlap with others, setting up friction between the members.

Each player defines at least one Pantheon member: Using the lists provided, pick a name and any four domains from the lists. You may also roll randomly on each list.

Unlikely combinations are not a problem—they break you out of the cliché, encouraging your Pantheon to be unique. There is always a story that can knit the domains together.

The City

The City is where you all live. It is a labyrinth of treacherous laws and customs that you mostly know. No matter how you feel about the City, or how it feels about you, it's home. However, it leaves little room for you to live in peace.

Within the City, you may have found an informal community that offers more warmth, but it is under stress just like you—and sometimes directly because of your actions. It will not save you.

There are 14 questions on the worksheet. Go around the table, taking turns answering one at a time.

The Wilds

The Wilds are the untamed regions surrounding the City and stretching infinitely far away. They are home to dangerous creatures who are indifferent to your suffering or death. They are trackless and seemingly impenetrable. The creatures' laws and customs, largely unknown, may or may not apply to you.

For the Pantheon, Alex picks the name Adad. They decide Adad's domains are War, Hyenas and Jackals, Wholeness, and Lost Children. Hyenas and jackals scavenge carrion from the battlefield, so the link with war makes sense. For wholeness and lost children, Alex says that in the first war of heaven, Adad was split in two, and half of him died and went to the Underworld. Adad's mother traveled there to retrieve his half-shade. She put the shade in an egg and fed it to him, making him whole again. Now that half of him has been to the Underworld, Adad no longer fears death, making him brave in battle. People pray to him to make them brave as well.

The landscape is dominated by clay river valleys, with rivers thick with reeds. Downriver are fertile marshes and deltas. Upriver are forests, hills, and mountains. Beyond the rivers' reach, the land turns to deserts of rock or sand. Out to sea are rocky islands, sometimes volcanic. You may place your City anywhere among these regions.

Venture into the Wilds to blaze new trails, literally and figuratively. There is no map for where to go or how to be. Discover things about yourselves and each other, facing the perils and potential of love without rules.

On the worksheet, take turns choosing what kinds of terrain and rumored wonders you wish to encounter. Pick what dangers the Wilds pose to humans, and how the City takes revenge on the Wilds.

The Legacy of Atlantis

The Atlanteans were the Pantheon's first mortal creation—before humans. They found ways to love that humans are still piecing together, long after the gods effaced their radiant, ethereal civilization that we call Atlantis.

As you explore their lonely, blasted ruins, you may discover echoes of our time; lessons from the elders. They achieved glory beyond mortal dreams, which you may try to revive. But they were different from you, and you must live your lives in your time.

They wish to live again. Through sorcery—their precarious legacy to us—they just might.

Like the Pantheon's members, sorcery has domains: these are the cracks in creation, where the gods' grasp fumbles and sorcery seeps in.

Take turns, each picking one aspect of the civilization, its inhabitants, and sorcery.

If you choose, you may also answer questions about the nearest Atlantean ruin now, or put them off until they become relevant. The questions are ordered so you can answer one question at a time as you consider finding the ruin, journey closer to it, and eventually enter it.

Death and the Underworld

At some point, you may encounter shades—the immortal remnant of dead mortals—their realm, or their ruler. Define them in the worksheet, either at game start or when they come up.

Death is relentless, hungry, and inevitable. It is subject only to the gods. It is also ruled by a god of Death, whether you define them initially or not.

The questions are ordered so you can answer them one at a time as you hear more about the Underworld, journey closer to it, and eventually venture in.

Answer Relationship Questions

Now you have built adventurers and a world for them to contend with. The next few questions help you connect the adventurers to each other and the world.

1. Take turns asking interpersonal relationship questions.
2. Answer the World Force-related questions.
3. Frame and begin the game's first World Scene.

Interpersonal Questions

Next, take turns asking one of your interpersonal relationship questions. These are all about the other adventurers. See who volunteers to be the person it describes, and together fill out the rest of the answer.

Depending on the question and its answer, you may choose to give that person 0, 1, or 2 Hearts.

When you give someone a Heart, the decision is yours, but they write it down on *their* sheet. It becomes a resource that they can spend to Influence you. You don't record Hearts that other people have from you.

When you write down a Heart in the Relationships section of your sheet, write a brief note about why they care about you.

Go around the table, asking questions until everyone has a relationship with at least one other person, preferably two. Make sure everyone gets the chance to ask the same number of questions.

World Force Questions

Last, have each player answer 1 to 2 of the World Force-related questions on their sheet. This sets up reasons for the World Forces to create trouble with you.

Now you have complete adventurers ready to shine, and antagonistic World Forces ready to engulf them in darkness. Everyone is connected to the world and each other in some way.

Off You Go!

You're ready to play. Start with a World Scene (see page 36).

CHAPTER

The Playbooks

THE REVENANT 68

You have returned from the Underworld to feel the sun once again. Whoever you used to be, you're not them anymore.

THE SAILOR 77

You are flirtatious and promiscuous, fearlessly winning hearts—even if you sometimes break them.

THE SORCERER 88

You immersed yourself in learning, where you found the forbidden language that shapes the universe—sorcery.

THE SWORD 101

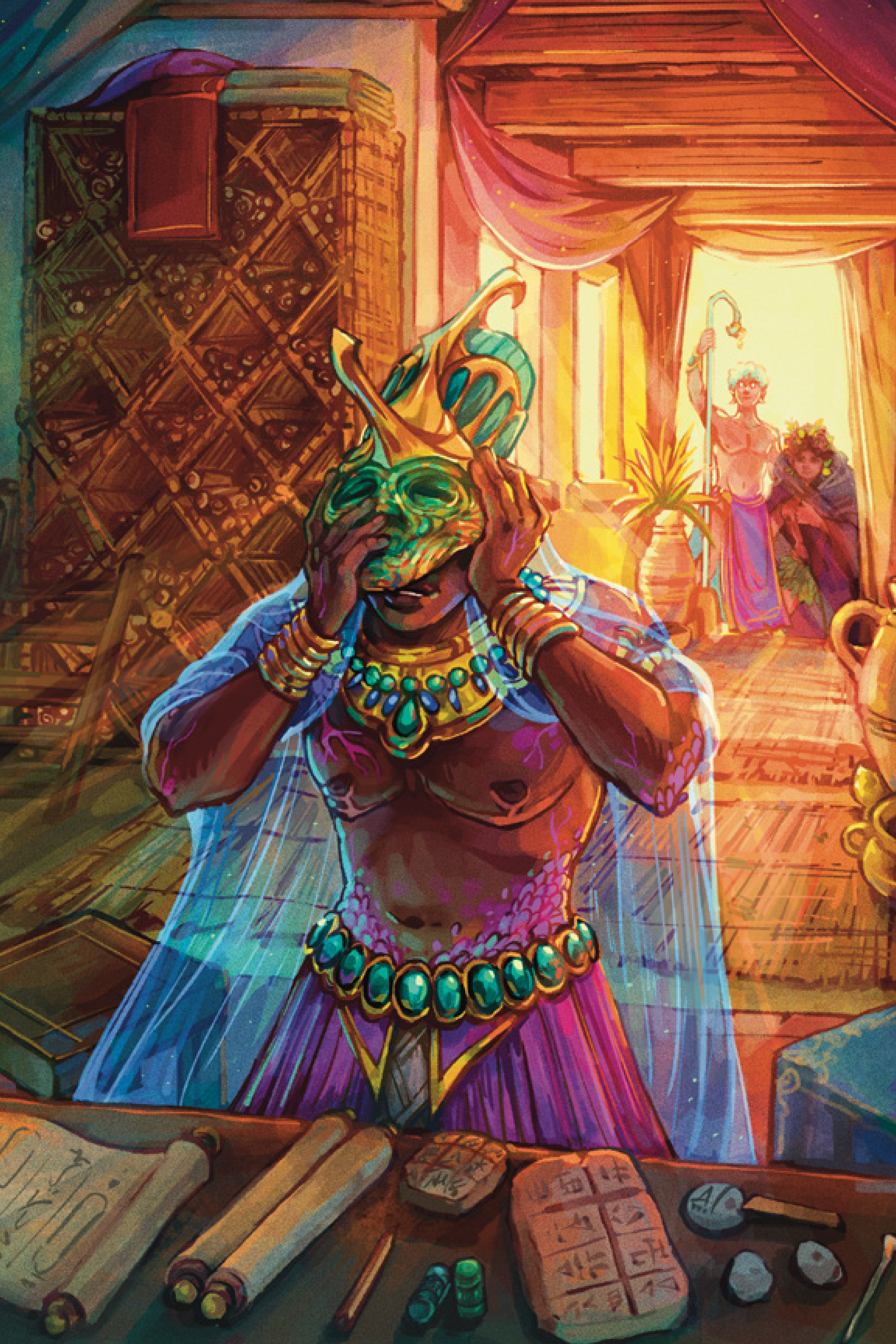
Life is simple at the point of a blade. You believe you can solve any problem with your strong arms—including protecting your friends.

THE VESSEL 113

You love and serve a minor god—your patron. They love you, inhabit you, and possess you.

THE WOLFLING 122

You are wild. Though you were born human, giant animals raised you as their own child.



THE REVENANT

You have returned from the Underworld to feel the sun once again. Whoever you used to be, you're not them anymore. You think your friends can help you learn who you are now. But the World tempts you to take up your former role, and demons called the gallu *are hunting you to drag you back below the earth.*

Your Adventurer

Choose a name: Alad, Dugmu, Gidim, Igira, Maaz, Mumu, Tigi, Ushbuzur, Zizi, a melancholy name, a blooming name, a name from the playbook I used to be

Describe your gender: Spring flowers, Gold mask, Empty tomb, Mummified, New moon, Eclipsed sun, Transformed, Ambiguous, Other

Eyes: Black as the abyss, Bright as sunrise, Twinkling with a private joke, Hungry

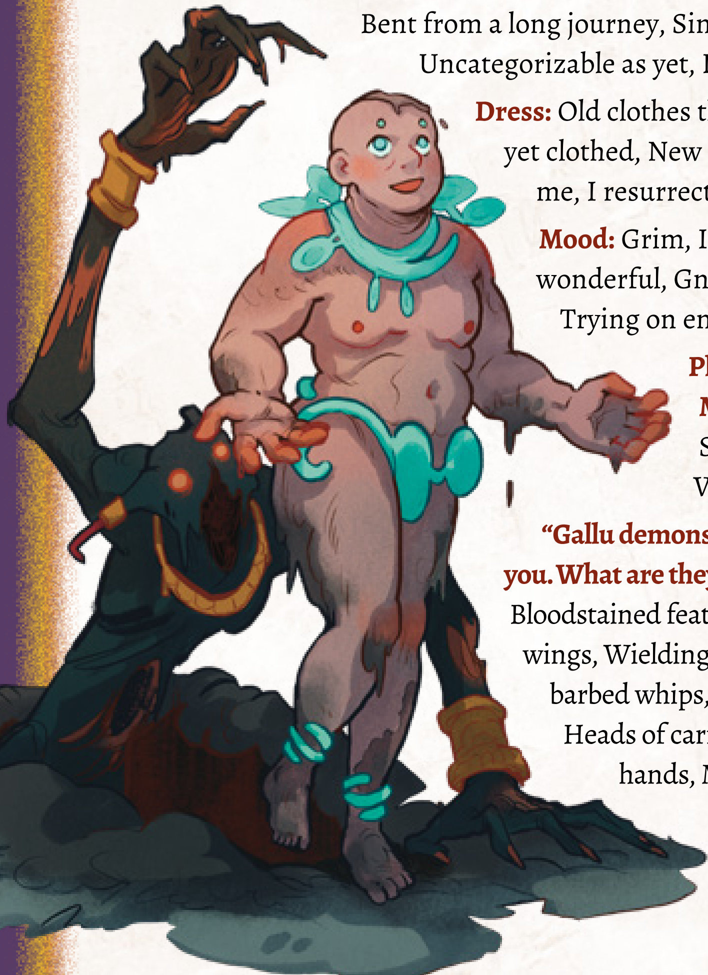
Body: Energetic, Wasted away, Thick with new sap, Bent from a long journey, Sinuous as smoke, Uncategorizable as yet, Locked room

Dress: Old clothes that no longer fit, Not yet clothed, New clothes for the new me, I resurrected like this

Mood: Grim, It all seems new and wonderful, Gnawed by old worries, Trying on emotions, Detached

Playbook Representing My Old Self: Sailor, Sorcerer, Sword, Vessel, Wolfling

"Gallu demons" are searching for you. What are they like? (Pick up to 2): Bloodstained feathers, Leathery bat wings, Wielding iron maces, Lashing barbed whips, Heads of jackals, Heads of carrion birds, Talons for hands, Made of funeral stone



Epithets

Suggested Epithets: who will not be silenced again, who sees the potential locked in every person and thing, who refuses to let others define them, who has the strength to overcome despair, who is determined to keep trying, who speaks with shadows without becoming one, who has unearthly persistence, who helps their friends learn who they are

Relationship Questions

Using the prompts below as a guide, give 0–2 Hearts to each other adventurer.

- Who has tried to get the rest of the World to accept you as a new person? Why hasn't it worked?
- Who once defended you from gallu demons? Why do you think they did it?
- Who thinks they know who you really are now? Why do you want to believe them?

World Forces Questions

After creating the World Forces, answer 1 to 2 questions below:

- A Pantheon member helped you escape Death. Why? And why do they now seek your destruction?
- Who among the City's ruling class would accept you only as your old self? What makes you feel like you owe them? Give them 1 Heart.
- Who did you leave behind in the Underworld, and what pious person is using them as leverage over you? Give 1 Heart to the shade you left behind.

End of Session Questions

At the end of each session, mark 1 XP for each question you answer "yes":

- Did you learn something new about yourself?
- Did you tell others something about who you are now?
- Did you resist efforts to return to Death or your old life?

Special Heart Move

When you share an intimate moment with one or more others, ask if they will give up something about themselves. If someone says yes, give them +1 Heart. If any say otherwise, give +1 Heart to someone in the Underworld (or the god of Death). Then clear all Wounds of all involved.

Revenant Crisis

It's too much: pretending you're not dead, pretending you've ever been more than a spectator in your own life. The gallu demons find you. They drag a piece of you down to the Underworld, sparing the rest of you only because it's already dead. The GM will say who or what else that was beautiful withers in their wake.

Change one Epithet to describe how passive, numb, or in thrall to Death you feel. For instance, "Who speaks with shadows without becoming one" may become "Who grows deadened by speaking with shadows." After you do, increase its worth by 1 and clear your Wounds.

Revenant Playbook Moves

At character creation, choose 2 more regular moves below, for a total of 4.

● BREATH OF TOMBS (FIGHTING MOVE)

When you wish to breathe death on an enemy, invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: a fœtid vapor passes from your lips. Your nearest enemy within arm's reach chokes, taking 1 Wound. If they are still alive, take Wounds as directed.

On an 11+: you billow out a cloud of pestilence and death; everyone in the scene withers—friend and foe alike—taking 1 Wound. Mark Fire. If an enemy is within arm's reach, take Wounds as directed.

On a 7 or less: the cloud remains in you; take 1 Wound. The GM will say what else happens.

When you make this move, you are setting in motion not just your attack but also your enemy's counter-attack.

If you defeat your enemy by inflicting the last Wound they can take, do not "take Wounds as directed."

When the move says “take Wounds as directed,” that could be 1, 2, or 3 Wounds, depending on how powerful and significant to the story they are—that is, how many Epithets they have. The GM should make clear before you commit to the move how many Wounds that is. (The GM should read Wounding the Adventurers: A Sense of Scale, page 171.)

If you and another adventurer come to blows, make sure what you really want is to Wound them, physically or emotionally. If you’re just trying to prove a point, **Entice** them, **Figure Them Out**, or **Bolt** past them, do that instead. Fighting between two adventurers is not how this game is supposed to go, but sometimes it happens. When deciding how many Wounds to take, the attacking adventurer still inflicts 1, but the opposing adventurer inflicts a number of Wounds consistent with how many Epithets they have, so even when attacking a beginning adventurer, you might take 2 Wounds in a single use of **Breath of Tombs**, at the GM’s discretion.

● I CAN BE ANYBODY

When you want to seem to be another human, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you play the new role expertly. With the aid of clothes and accessories, only your friends can tell it’s you until you roll a miss (7-) on any move.

On an 11+: you get caught up in the persona, even though it doesn’t feel right. You have difficulty separating yourself from the role, and your friends may not believe it’s you. Give 1 Heart to someone your new role would care about. You remain in this persona until you mark Fire, or a friend spends a Heart of yours to pull you out of it.

On a 7 or less: the persona doesn’t fit, and it shows. You draw unwelcome attention to yourself.

You are still figuring out who you are. In the process, you may try on other personae.

On a glowing success (8–10), you’re in charge of the play-acting. But on a burning success (11+), it takes control of you. On a miss (7-), you’re not fooling anybody—except maybe yourself.

○ SHADE WITNESSES

The dead are always near you. When you listen to their whispers, invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: they tell you useful things. Ask 2 questions from below:

- What future danger can I avoid?
- What would you do here if you were alive?
- What do you recall about ______?
- What advantage can we gain over the threat we face?
- How can I escape the gallu demons next time?

On an 11+: ask 2 above, but you embrace death too tightly. Give +1 Heart to someone in the Underworld (or the god of Death).

On a 7 or less: the dead resent the sun on your cheeks. Ask 1 question, but the answer leaves you feeling drained. Mark 1 Wound.

Poor, lost shades hover around you, hoping to lure you back to them, or to warm themselves near your living heat. They remember much and can prophesy things to come. When you escaped the Underworld, you lost those abilities, but you can pluck crowding shades from the air and question them.

Unfortunately, this makes them strengthen their hold on you. On a burning success (11+), Death, whether as an immortal being or a concept, gets your Heart a little bit more. On a miss (7-), Death saps life from you.

○ WELLSPRING

Whatever reanimated you, it fills you with possibility. When you share this life force with someone who lets you touch them, invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: you pass them some spark. They unmark 1 Wound.

On an 11+: your touch overwhelms them with visions of immortality. They unmark 1 Wound and mark Fire.

On a 7 or less: you pass only rot and despair. They mark 1 Wound, unless you choose to instead. The GM will say what else happens.

The spark of life, whether fleeting or eternal, is in your touch, and those around you benefit from its warm glow. Sometimes, however, you pass on only the sad, dead things you feel.

○ IN MEMORIAM

When you encounter a side character or location that meant something to you before you died, say what that connection was, then invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: you see them or it with new eyes. Choose:

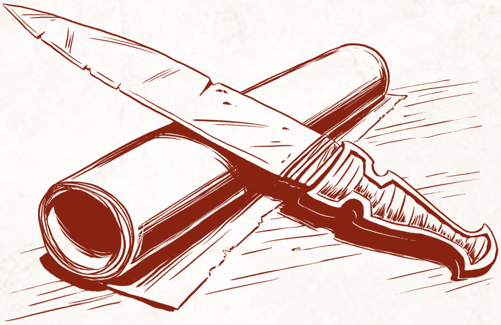
- Gain +1 Heart from the person; they still care for you.
- Roll with +/-1 to navigate the place in this scene; your past here helps you.

On an 11+: your old relationship cannot withstand facing your proud, new self. Mark Fire. The people you remember discard any Hearts of yours. When you fight someone connected to the memory, inflict +1 Wound.

On a 7 or less: the memory traps you in nostalgic melancholy. Give the person 1 Heart. The GM will say how your past life intrudes on your current relationships.

Memories of who you used to be are all around you. When you make this move, you may suggest to the GM that you have a connection to a side character or place. If the GM agrees, you have free rein to narrate what that connection was.

On a burning success (11+), your old connections wither in your presence. On a miss (7-), they grow more real and heavy, burdening you.



○ ERRAND SHADES

When you command the shades who linger near you, invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: they bow to your demands, ready to do a single errand for you. They can appear before others, speak to them, and radiate emotions, but they cannot move solid things.

On an 11+: the shades are made more palpable by your flame. Mark Fire. They will do an errand for you, including appearing to others, speaking to them, terrifying them, or even moving solid things. But they will remain solid and be unleashed on the world.

On a 7 or less: the shades rebel, chilling you and trying to drag you back to your resting place. Give +1 Heart to someone in the Underworld (or the god of Death) or else mark 1 Wound.

Poor, lost shades hover around you, hoping to lure you back to them, or to warm themselves near your living heat. You can ask them to help you. However, on a miss (7-), they slip from your control and try to make you serve them instead.

Revenant Doom Moves

○ FORGED IN THE UNDERWORLD

Take the Doom "who hardens into stone."

You have strength enough to bear any burden if you draw on memories of your unfeeling time as a shade. When you want to add +1 to a move's result after rolling, mark Fire, then pick 1:

- Take back 1 Heart from anyone present.
- Give +1 Heart to someone in the Underworld or the god of Death.

Say how you prefer unlife to failure.

If you are willing to feel dead again, you can accomplish great things. When you take back 1 Heart from someone, the GM or another player erases it from their sheet. You don't modify your sheet. Also, note that you can only *add* 1 to a roll result, not add or remove 1. You may make this move only once per scene.

○ PARASITIC TOUCH

Take the Doom "the bringer of the grave."

When you touch a mortal side character and open a tunnel to the Underworld, mark Fire to sap the life from them. They mark 1 Wound for every Wound you unmark, but they do not die.

Your victim notices you draining the life force out of them, unless they are unconscious. If merely asleep, they are likely to wake up with a rush of urgency. They will act immediately after you make this move with their full ability—though they are fragile. In a subsequent move, you or someone else can kill them by other means.

○ PRIVATE HELL

Take the Doom "who cheats Death of its harvest."

When someone near you dies—by whatever means—mark Fire to pull their shade to you instead of letting it slip into the Underworld. Write their name in a list of shades bound to serve you. It whispers all it knows to you. Later, instead of taking a Wound, you can mark Fire again to make the shade absorb the harm. Cross them off your list: Their soul is destroyed, they can never return to life, and you forget everything they told you. Some people may even forget they ever existed. Describe their most cherished memory, the last one you forget.

When you draw a shade to you in this way, its life opens to you, and you hear all it knew while still alive. This does not mean you understand everything you hear. Because you have pulled it into your orbit, the shade never gains the gift of prophecy that shades in the Underworld receive, so you can learn only what it knew at the moment of death.

As if this weren't enough, you can use them as armor. However, when you do, their souls do not go to the Underworld, but instead are destroyed forever. In their wake, you must think about the memory they clung to tightest.

Playing the Revenant

The Revenant is a new person, but the shadow of your old self lingers over you. Your journey is to definitively separate yourself from who you used to be, both in your previous life and in the unlife of the Underworld.

The moves are divided between ones that explore your new life in all its unrealized potential and those that leverage your unbroken connection to the dead.

Death pursues you, intent on retrieving you and making you a shade once more. Until then, Death perceives your life as an injury to cosmic order. The gallu demons are the emissaries of Death and a constant threat. They are usually violent and direct, but they may parley with other World Forces to secure your return. When the GM makes a move against you, the gallu may be involved.

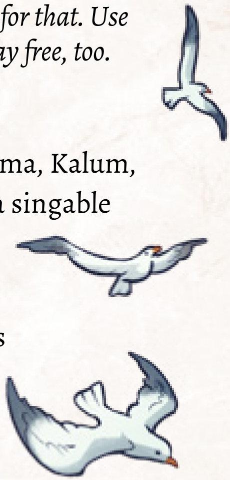
The Revenant's Doom arc threatens to tie you forever to Death, either by revisiting your experience as a shade or by setting you up with your own Underworld.

THE SAILOR

You are flirtatious and promiscuous, fearlessly winning hearts—even if you sometimes break them. You can't settle down and are a citizen of nowhere. The authorities mistrust you and your many allegiances. They would force you to swear obedience to them, but you know the horizon is too wide for that. Use your wits to stay free and love freely—and help your friends stay free, too.

Your Adventurer

Choose a name: Andal, Bardumu, Erisish, Hada, Idamma, Kalum, Meleme, Sherzi, Usha, Zuraba, an affectionate name, a singable name, a name from far away



Describe Your Gender: Ebb & flow of tides, Fair wind, Unplumbed depths, Scintillating fish scales, Relentless shark, Gold coin tossed in air, Ambiguous, Other

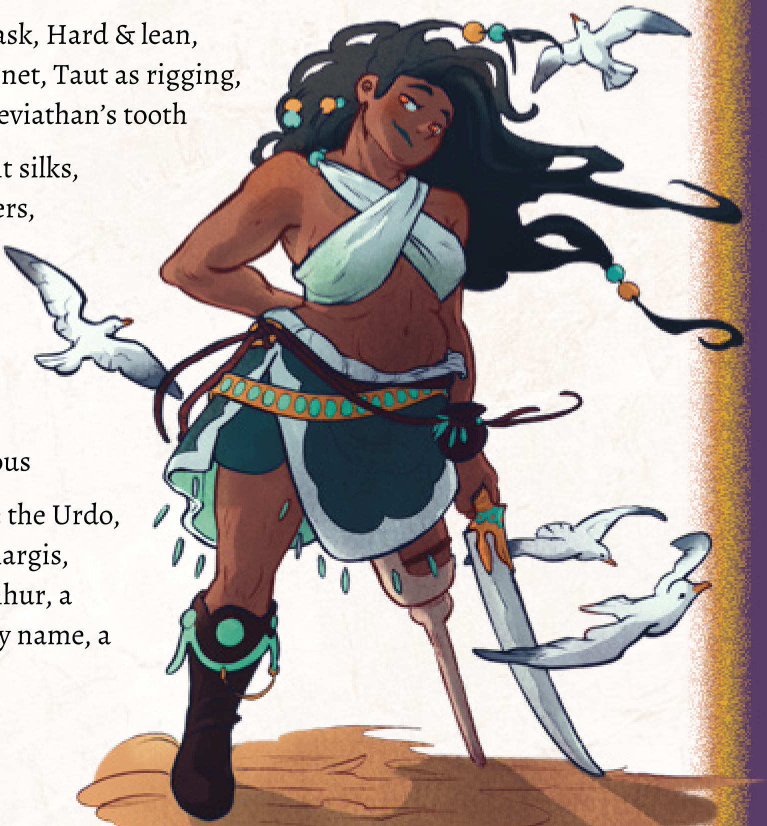
Eyes: Gray as storm clouds, Wine-dark as the sea, Blue as clear skies, Brown as cedar planks, Black as pitch, Eyepatch

Body: Stout as a cask, Hard & lean, Generous as a full net, Taut as rigging, Leg made from a leviathan's tooth

Dress: Extravagant silks, Salt-stained leathers, Waterproof oilcloth, Nought but trousers

Manner: Grim, Jolly, Intensely staring, Mischievous

Pick a Ship Name: the Urdo, the Daron, the Amargis, the Magid, the Zinhur, a fast name, a sturdy name, a lucky name



Epithets

Suggested Epithets: who thirsts for the unknown, who flirts readily with anyone, who never passes up a chance to negotiate, who dips their words in honey, who finds a way out of every corner, who shows only glimpses of their heart, who wants to see how far a rule will bend, who never stops coming up with plans

Relationship Questions

Using the prompts below as a guide, give 0–2 Hearts to each other adventurer.

- Who got caught with you in a heist? Why was it your fault the two of you got caught?
- Who knows you lie to them? Why do they still want to trust you?
- Who makes you feel boxed in? Why would leaving make it worse?

World Forces Questions

After creating the World Forces, answer 1 to 2 questions below:

- Who among the City's wealthy wants to force you to settle down? What are they holding over you? Give them 1 Heart.
- What did you steal from an Atlantean ruin? Why won't you give it up, despite its curse?
- What forbidden place did you once voyage to? Which Pantheon member did you enrage as a result?

End of Session Questions

At the end of each session, mark 1 XP for each question you answer "yes":

- Did you explore someplace or someone new?
- Did you help others see how wide and varied the world is?
- Did the consequences of your actions catch up to you?

Special Heart Move

You collect Hearts easily. When you put on the charm in a social situation, take +1 Heart from all who let you tell them a beguiling lie. Then clear all Wounds of all involved.

Sailor Crisis

You stumble without grace. Your tricks catch up with you, and your invented persona shreds into a thousand pieces. Everyone can see how mediocre you really are. Describe how you cut yourself off from anyone who might still need you or believe in you. The GM will say how they get caught in your net of failure.

Change one Epithet to describe how pathetic and alone you feel. For instance, "Who flirts readily with anyone" may become "Who flirts desperately with anyone." After you do, increase its worth by 1 and clear your Wounds.

Sailor Playbook Moves

At character creation, choose 2 more regular moves below, for a total of 4.

● CREWMATES

You are captain of a ship, and life aboard is close-knit and intense. When anyone aboard disagrees with you about what to do, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you get your way, promising to make it up to those who disagreed. Give 1 Heart to each of them.

On an 11+: you enforce your will ruthlessly, damn the others. Discard 1 Heart from each of them (if you have it) as they harden toward you, and mark Fire.

On a 7 or less: one or more of the others get their way instead. They promise to make it up to you and each give you 1 Heart.

Your ship is a galley or reed ship, and you can use it to take your group of adventurers to distant lands. When the adventurers are aboard, they are part of the crew. The GM can introduce side characters on the crew as well.

Expect the GM to introduce strife that leads to this move. The disagreements may be about where to go, whether to turn back, who gets to use the ship's limited resources, or how to get out from under a curse laid by the Pantheon.

When you get your way, it doesn't mean your decision works out for the best, and when you don't, it doesn't mean you're doomed. But a captain is expected to make decisions and give orders.

● DAZZLING BLADE (FIGHTING MOVE)

When you attack with panache or trickery, invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: you fight artfully. Inflict 1 Wound and take Wounds as directed in return. Pick 1:

- Parry: Take -1 Wound.
- Vault: Acrobatically get past obstacles and draw all eyes to you. Your next Bolt is +1.
- Spar: Flirt with or provoke your enemy and gain +1 Heart from them.

On an 11+: you fight with deadly beauty. Mark Fire. Inflict 2 Wounds and take Wounds as directed in return. Pick 1 above; the GM picks 1 below:

- Intimidate: You dismay friend and foe alike. One of your friends takes 1 Wound as well.
- Overextend: You press your advantage too far, and now you are cut off from your friends or otherwise vulnerable.

On a 7 or less: your fencing fails you. Take at least 1 Wound from brute force or harsh honesty. The fight escalates, and the enemy gets an opportunity.

By default, this move describes you fencing artfully, but it can also describe a sneak attack.

When you make this move, you are setting in motion not just your attack but the entire exchange between you and your enemy. So, your roll determines both how many Wounds you inflict and how many you take.

If you defeat your enemy by inflicting the last Wound they can take, do not “take Wounds as directed.” If you roll a burning success (11+), the GM still gets to pick from the second list, even if you know the enemy is about to die.

When the move says “take Wounds as directed,” that could be 1, 2, or 3 Wounds, depending on how powerful and significant to the story they are—that is, how many Epithets they have. The GM should make clear before you commit to the move how many Wounds that is. (The GM should read Wounding the Adventurers: A Sense of Scale, page 171.)

If you and another adventurer come to blows, make sure what you really want is to Wound them, physically or emotionally. If you're just trying to prove a point, **Entice** them, **Figure Them Out**, or **Bolt** past them, do that instead. Fighting between two adventurers is not how this game is supposed to go, but sometimes it happens. When deciding how many Wounds to take, the attacking adventurer still inflicts 1, but the opposing adventurer inflicts a number of Wounds consistent with how many Epithets they have, so even when attacking a beginning adventurer, you might take 2 Wounds in a single use of **Dazzling Blade**, at the GM's discretion.

○ ESCAPE ARTIST

When escape from a situation seems impossible, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you escape consequences, for now, but you owe someone a reckoning. Give them 1 Heart. The GM will say if you take a Wound on the way out.

On an 11+: you might as well have turned to smoke. Nothing is ever your fault. Take 1 Heart from whomever you escaped, as you leave them laughing, smitten, or in your debt. Mark Fire.

On a 7 or less: consequences bite down on you, and the situation escalates. Clear your Fire Track in your humility. The GM will say if you take a Wound, and what else happens.

This is a versatile move: Escape from combat, certain death, prosecution, embarrassment, a scorned lover, an unwanted lover, or any situation you no longer want to be in.

On a glowing success (8–10), give someone 1 Heart only if they are involved in or enforcing the situation you're escaping; if your situation is entirely impersonal, do not give anyone 1 Heart, but ask the GM what other complications are waiting in your future.

Similarly, on a burning success (11+), take 1 Heart from someone only if they are involved in or enforcing the situation you're escaping; if your situation is entirely impersonal, do not take 1 Heart from anyone, but ask the GM how else you gain leverage over the situation.

On a miss (7-), expect everything you wanted to escape to get worse than it was before, confronting your Sailor with their most dreaded fears.

○ OLD FLAME

When you are in a human settlement you've been to before, name a side character you were intimate with who lives here. Then invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: you left them wistful. Take +1 Heart from them.

On an 11+: you left them desperate for you, soft clay in your hands. Take +1 Heart from them if you mark Fire.

On a 7 or less: it ended badly, and they're still angry.

You may invent a new side character, narrating them into the scene, or you may pick someone whom someone else has already described as being there. Either way, they exist and they know you, regardless of the result of your roll. However, they are the GM's character to narrate.

Any human settlement works, from a foreign City to an enclave in the middle of the Wilds. When you are somewhere that has not come up before, it is up to the GM how freely you may claim that your Sailor has been there.

Limit this move to one person per settlement, unless the GM is excited to play more side characters. If you name more than one person per settlement, expect their relationship with each other to be messy.

On a miss (7-), you have just narrated a new antagonist into being. Expect the GM to run with it.

○ BRIDGES

When you want two people you know to connect, say how you sing the praises of one to the other, then invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you build a bridge between them. Give the listener 1 Heart from the other person, or give the other person 1 Heart from the listener.

On an 11+: you are the bridge. Take 1 Heart from both the listener and the other person, and mark Fire, as they come under your sway.

On a 7 or less: you burn the bridge. Lose 1 Heart from each person, if you have any, as you lose their trust.

What's better than seeing two people you like fall for each other? It makes you happy to make others happy. If one or both of the two is an adventurer, get their player's consent before handing the other person their Heart, and ask them what kind of relationship they want their adventurer to be in.

On a glowing success (8–10), you've planted the seeds of attraction, or at least interest. On a burning success (11+), you've made this about you somehow, and you get leverage over both of the others. On a miss (7-), it gets ugly: One or both of the others has reason to resent your meddling.

Restrict this move to characters with whom your Sailor already has a relationship. If you want to invent someone new in the story, see "Old Flame."

○ MAP MAKER

You have traveled widely across this mostly unknown world. The first time you make this move, take a blank sheet of paper and draw a dot for the City in the middle of it. Then, and every subsequent time you make this move, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: draw 1:

- Another City, an Atlantean ruin, or a wild place, far away. What do you desire that you have found only there? Which other adventurer was there too?
- A coastline or chain of islands connecting your current location to another place, letting you find your way. Which adventurer do you want to see it with?

On an 11+: draw 1 of the above and 1 obstacle from the options listed under a miss (7-) below. Why is the destination you most desire forbidden to you?

On a 7 or less: draw an obstacle between you and the destination you most want to find: a stormwind, whirlpool, sea creature, cursed ruin, cursed island, or region forbidden to mortals by the Pantheon. Which adventurer reminds you of it, and how?

Unlike most other adventurers, the Sailor has learned something of the wider mortal realm. This move lets you narrate new parts of that realm into being.

At the same time, this is not your solo map-making RPG inside an RPG. Each result involves another adventurer, somehow. Also, when you draw the map, you are revealing to the other adventurers a map or fragment of map that you already possessed.

In the fiction, the map itself is probably cut into clay or stone.

Sailor Doom Moves

○ WOULD YOU DIE FOR ME?

Take the Doom "who throws others into hell."

You have a crew of side characters who love you desperately. They give you 1 Heart. When you roll a miss (7-) or a burning success (11+), and this crew is helping you, you can spend the Heart to evade the consequences. Describe how some or all of your crew suffer or die to give you a glowing success (8–10). When you are in a time and place where you can look for a new crew, mark Fire again to recruit them.

When you take this move, you already have your first devoted crew. Gain 1 Heart from them as a group. Any time you don't like your result, if your crew is involved, you can sacrifice them to get the result you want. The GM may decide that more of your crew die than you intended. Somehow, this doesn't keep you from finding a new crew. Let the GM decide when and where you may go recruiting.

○ HAULED FROM THE DEEPS

Take the Doom "who collects rare and monstrous things."

When you want to solve a problem using a rare artifact that you found on your travels, mark Fire and say what it is. It is well suited to the problem at hand, but it also complicates your life and your friends' lives with unforeseeable side effects.

Over the course of your travels, you have found sorcerous trinkets, Atlantean clockworks, or divine treasures. Reach into your bag for one now. The GM has free rein to say what side effects it has, although you may use other moves (like "Would You Die for Me?" or "Escape Artist") to keep them from affecting you directly.

○ NAVARCH

Take the Doom "who captures the world in their net."

You know a fleet of trading ships and raiders who sail across the great sea. When you need a foreign person or useful fact, mark Fire and say who or what it is. A ship in the fleet has put the person or knowledge at your fingertips, to use now. At the same time, the ship has brought misfortune: leaked secrets, panicking rumors, a deadly plague, or war. The more useful or unlikely the knowledge is, the bigger the corresponding misfortune.

While "Hauled from the Deeps" is about having the right object, "Navarch" (pronounced NAY-vark) is about knowing the right person or information.

An expansionist fleet of crews both peaceful and warring is trying to encompass the known world, and you are connected to it. Your relationship to them may start as simply knowing a captain of one of the ships, but as you gain more Dooms, your authority over them grows.

The GM has free rein to say what effects the misfortune has, although you may use other moves (like "Would You Die for Me?" or "Escape Artist") to keep it from affecting you directly.

Playing the Sailor

The Sailor is a fast-talking, fast-thinking trickster. They're also an incorrigible flirt. This is the dashing scoundrel, like Sindbad, Odysseus, or Robin Hood as a fox. In both fortune and love, they are always just barely getting away with it.

The Sailor makes friends and lovers easily. They are designed as a nightmare of a polyamorous person. However, their social moves work just as well for a network of friends as for a web of lovers, so dial the intimacy to where you want it. Sometimes, your friends and lovers become enemies, as in **Old Flame**.

The Sailor is also widely traveled. You start with a ship, which you describe as part of **Crewmates**, one of your default moves. However, although you have crewmates, they do not necessarily go along with what you tell them to do. **Crewmates** says what happens when you disagree with them—both side characters and your fellow adventurers.

The move says your starting ship is a "galley or reed ship". Galleys are wooden rowing ships with a single square sail that you can use when there is wind. Reed ships are sailboats made of dried reeds with triangular sails. However, these are suggestions—use whatever ship you like best.

Map Maker gives you wide latitude to make up new parts of the mortal realm and possibly visit them. Indulge your inner cartographer and give the GM ideas. If you want to change something on the map later, feel free, so long as the overall number of destinations, connections, and obstacles stays the same. Remember that your home City is just one place among many that the vast, central sea connects.

Over the course of their career, the Sailor slowly amasses more travels, more artifacts, and more information, as shown in **Hauled from the Deeps** and **Navarch**. These ultimately make you a powerful person and potential World Force, with a trading empire and several crews reporting to you. Even here, though, unintended consequences can come back to haunt you: Connecting the world speeds the transmission of plagues and secrets; dredging up Atlantean artifacts introduces effects that don't fit the world as it is today.

THE SORCERER

You immersed yourself in learning, where you found the forbidden language that shapes the universe—sorcery. Something true in you sings at its touch, at how it changes you. However, your obsession with ancient scrolls sometimes makes it hard to connect with your friends. Worse, the World finds you and your knowledge blasphemous. It wants you to somehow unlearn the things you've read, revert to a body it recognizes, and restrain yourself to "proper" learning.

Your Adventurer

Choose a Name: Anur, Dugan, Eanna, Kissam, Kuliana, Miri, Simusa, Tahara, Usha, an ancient name, an obscure name, an assumed name

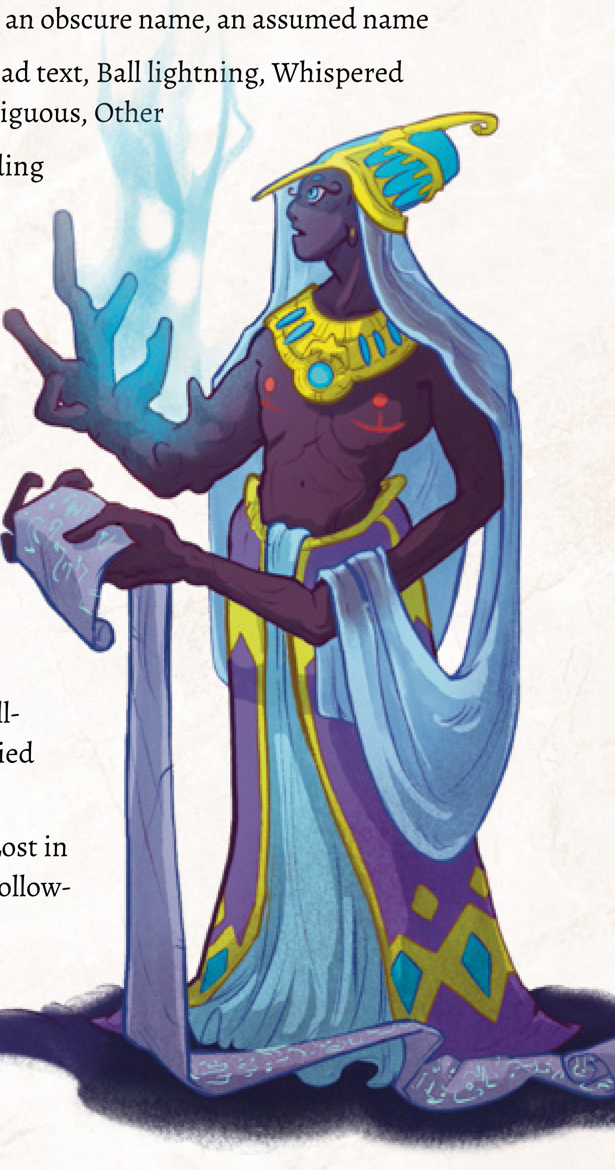
Describe your gender: An unread text, Ball lightning, Whispered secret, Absent, Possessed, Ambiguous, Other

Eyes: Haunted eyes, Commanding eyes, Bloodshot eyes, Painted eyes, Hypnotic eyes, Just the one, Just the three

Body: Thin as papyrus, Moving in unusual ways, Vast as the night sky, Wishing to escape its confines, Rippling & sinuous, Covered in Atlantean tattoos, Part stone or wood

Headgear: Sackcloth hood, Tall hat with astrological symbols, Quartz spectacles, Full-face cast-bronze mask, Beads tied in gray hair

Manner: Troubled, Forgetful, Lost in time, Constantly mumbling, Hollow-voiced, Booming, Whispering



Epithets

Suggested Epithets: who loves chaos's endless possibilities, who keeps trying to improve on everything, who wastes no time on fools, who finds refuge in ancient scrolls, who refuses to be satisfied with simple answers, who rejects the bonds of stupid human laws, who keeps their secrets guarded close, who despises superficial connections

Relationship Questions

Using the prompts below as a guide, give 0–2 Hearts to each other adventurer.

- Who sees beauty in your chaos, despite what the World thinks?
- Whom did you help with your sorcery? How has this made problems for them?
- Who do you think secretly wants to be changed by your sorcery?

World Forces Questions

After creating the World Forces, answer 1 to 2 questions below:

- You once breached Death's wall with sorcery. What shade changed your life forever? Give them 1 Heart.
- Who among the influential of the City shuns you for your body's shape or the way you act?
- What did you once learn that caused the Pantheon to sentence you to the same destruction Atlantis faced?

End of Session Questions

At the end of each session, mark 1 XP for each question you answer "yes":

- Did chaos change you or those around you?
- Did you help others see how mysterious life is?
- Did you endanger yourself to seek knowledge?

Special Heart Move

When you reveal the utter depths of your peculiarity to one or more others, ask if they would like to be changed as well, in body or spirit. For whoever says yes, give them +1 Heart and share in strangeness together. If any do not, retreat to the comfort of your scrolls: give +1 Heart to your dream of lost Atlantis. Either way, clear all Wounds of all involved, changed or not.

Sorcerer Crisis

Your intellect gutters and dies, leaving your mind a crumbling piece of clay. In this moment, you are merely a play-actor, dressed up in Atlantean baubles, twisting your body in a vain attempt to know the unknowable. Describe how distant you feel from any true Atlantis. The GM will say how your sorcery runs amok, and who or what it corrupts grotesquely.

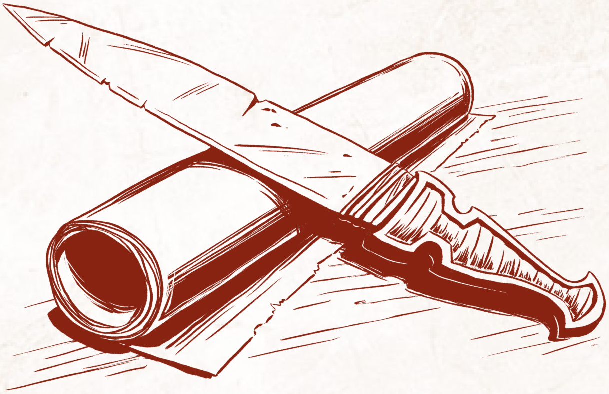
Change one Epithet to describe how ugly you make things. For instance, "Who loves chaos's endless possibilities" may become "Who loves chaos's twisted mutations." After you do, increase its worth by 1 and clear your Wounds.

Sorcerer Spells

At character creation, choose 3 more regular spells below, for a total of 6.

To cast a spell, roll 2d6 + a number of dice equal to the worth of the Epithet you invoke.

You may cast one spell whose dice pattern you see in the dice you rolled. If your dice don't match any spell, or if your two lowest dice sum to 2, it is a **miss**: You cast the Chaos spell below. If two dice sum to 11 or 12, the spell is a **burning success**. Otherwise, it is a **glowing success**.



● PAIR OF 1S CHAOS ⚀ ⚀

Always check for this spell first. If you roll snake eyes, this spell happens. You or the GM may choose one other spell that the dice allow for, but the GM will say how it misfires horribly. Regardless, mark 1 Wound as wild energy erupts around you; say how it warps your body or personality. If the spell is also a burning success (you roll a 5 and 6, or two 6s), the GM will describe its additional effects on others in the scene.

When this spell warps your body, make sure not to describe it in a way that is too functional, although no doubt you will find beauty in it eventually. For ideas, see the list of warpings under "Playing the Sorcerer" below. Your new form becomes the shape your body returns to after casting Metamorphosis to regain your "proper" shape.

You don't need to find a spell that you cast in addition to Chaos; that's purely optional and depends on the GM's discretion.

● TWO DICE SUM TO 8 SCRYING ☐+☐=8

Discern, in a silver mirror, the truth about a person, place, or thing—near or far.
On a glowing success: ask one question: the GM will answer honestly and in detail.

On a burning success: ask one question: the GM will answer honestly and in detail. Also ask, "What do I reveal about myself, and how is it a problem?"

Every sorcerer worth their scrolls carries a mirror made of silver, not much wider than a hand's breadth, that shows them sights from near or far away. On a burning success (you roll a 5 and 6, or two 6s), however, those observed in it also see something of the observer. They may notice something physically visible about you or something more abstract.

○ TWO DICE SUM TO 10 PHANTASM ☐+☐= 10

Take someone's belief about the world and make it manifest.
On a glowing success: it briefly fools mortal senses.

On a burning success: the illusion gains solid reality beyond your control; if you mark Fire, you can tame it but not dispel it.

This spell does not let you read minds; generally, it is obvious what others believe about the world, how it works, how people in it behave, and which of them are good or evil.

Using the belief or beliefs of someone currently present in the scene, channel the strength of their conviction to spin an illusion into being. It is as if the evidence for their belief suddenly burst forth into the scene. For example, if someone thinks jugglers are evil, a murderous juggler will stalk into view from around the nearest corner.

You can craft an illusion as small as a key or as large as a scene, but it should always confirm something that someone knew or suspected.

On a glowing success (no snake eyes, no two dice sum to 11 or 12), the firmer the person's belief, the more solid the thing seems and the longer it persists. While it lasts, it fools all the senses, but does not have objective reality—for instance, a phantasmic key cannot unlock a real door. After a minute or two at most, it loses coherence and dissipates.

On a burning success (you roll a 5 and 6, or two 6s), instead of dissipating, the illusion grows more real, proving the belief that brought it into being. It even gains objective reality, to the point where a phantasmic key can unlock a real door—but only if doing so confirms its originating belief. Then it leaves your control and goes out into the world: an illusory person walks off to live their now-real life; an illusory key gets lost and finds its way into others' hands. By marking Fire, you can give it commands and keep track of it, but you cannot change its underlying significance, and it will persist until the GM decides to dissolve it.

○ TWO DICE OF SEQUENTIAL VALUES MIGHT ☐ +1

Gain strength and power—for yourself or someone else—for the scene.
On a glowing success: grant anyone +1 to the Bolt move and their fighting move.

On a burning success: grant anyone +2 to Bolt and their fighting move, and -2 to Finesse.

Every other playbook has a fighting move: Clash for the Sword, Dazzling Blade for the Sailor, Fury for the Vessel, Maul for the Wolfling, and Breath of Tombs for the Revenant. However, for all your powers, you don't have a fighting move: If you cast this spell on yourself, you gain only the bonus to Bolt.

○ THREE DICE OF SEQUENTIAL VALUES ANIMATE ☐ +1 +2

Grant motion and awareness to one object up to your size.
On a glowing success: it is basically good-natured. It lives until destroyed: after taking 1 to 3 Wounds, depending on its size and construction.

On a burning success: you may animate something much bigger than you; it will do as it pleases, unless you make it bow to you by speaking a word of command and marking Fire.

In every seemingly dead thing, natural or artificial, there is a soul waiting to wake. With this spell, you may awaken an inanimate object equal to your size or smaller, letting the living perceive the living being it has always been. It is up to the GM whether it can speak or not. Regardless, it can move on its own and make its intentions clear.

When it dies, its soul becomes a shade, destined for the Underworld.

Only a glowing success (no snake eyes, no two dice sum to 11 or 12) results in a generally good-natured being. On a burning success (you roll a 5 and 6, or two 6s), the thing you animate takes no heed of you until you speak a word of command to it—which you represent mechanically by marking Fire. This command works for a time, but it does not have mystical power to enforce: the bigger the object is, the faster it will forget to obey you.

○ ALL DICE SUM TO NO MORE THAN 6 LIGHT & SHADOW ☐+☐+☐≤6

Flood an area with light or unleash inky shadows. If you spend a Heart from someone, this spell can magnify their noblest or most wretched traits.

On a glowing success: bathe any room-sized area with light or shadow.

On a burning success: bathe any room-sized area with light or shadow, but the effect spreads in size or intensity. If you mark Fire, you can control the direction in which it spreads but not contain it.

You must choose whether you are spreading light or darkness. By default, this move is about physical light as bright as noontime or shadows as dark as a moonlit night. However, when you spend a Heart, it becomes about that character's better or baser personality attributes. To change an adventurer's personality, their player must consent.

Whether physical or spiritual, on a burning success (you roll a 5 and 6, or two 6s), this spell has a runaway effect, and only the GM decides when it ends. When it's spiritual, that person's mood grows from upbeat to maniacal, or sinks from depressed to abyssal. You may mark Fire to suggest the ideas that the person's new personality traits inspire in them, but not how far they go with them.

○ ALL DICE SUM TO AT LEAST 12 ELEMENTS ☐+☐+☐≥12

Summon winds, earthquakes, runaway reeds or trees, metalstorms, floods, or sudden flames. If you spend a Heart from someone, this spell can instead change their temper: delighting, sobering, saddening, or enraging them.

On a glowing success: summon a single element in a room-sized area.

On a burning success: summon a single element. The elements rage and escape your control—unless you mark Fire.

The stable world we see persists only through the careful balance of its component elements, always kept harnessed in tension against each other. This spell lets one of those elements slip from its reins.

You must choose which element you are allowing to break free. The element comes out of the things all around you and is pointed more or less in the direction you want.

By default, this move is about physical elements—clay tiles that fly off the wall in a sudden vortex of wind, or rocks that suddenly release floodwaters. However, when you spend a Heart, it becomes about that person's emotional mood. To change an adventurer's mood, their player must consent.

On a burning success (you roll a 5 and 6, or two 6s), whether physical or spiritual, this spell runs away from your control, and only the GM decides when it ends. You may mark Fire to control the direction of the element—or the purposes that the person's new mood inspires in them—but not how far the elements rage or the person goes.

● TWO DICE OF EQUAL VALUE METAMORPHOSIS ☐=☐

Transform yourself or a mortal or creature near you into another mortal or creature. To restore the original form, you must cast this spell again.
On a glowing success: you transform the being into a being of your choice, the same size or smaller. They retain their pre-transformation abilities—speech, reason, skills, and talents.

On a burning success: you reveal the subject's true form, at least as it is now: their player describes it.

This spell has many applications: You can perfectly impersonate someone else. You can become a giant version of a creature that is normally much smaller than you, like a bird or an insect. You can replicate the special abilities of the creature you become, like the manticore's venomous sting.

If you transform a person or a creature who can speak and reason, they can still speak and reason when they transform.

You transform only the flesh of the subject. Any clothes or items on them do not transform.

To cast this spell on an adventurer, their player must consent.

When you cast this spell to restore your original shape, you retain all the inconvenient warping that your body sustained before. You may not use this spell to look “like you, but normal.”

On a burning success (you roll a 5 and 6, or two 6s), the subject does not take the shape you intended, but instead turns into a perfect manifestation of who or what they truly are at this moment. Their player says what this looks like, and what “truly” means. Because truths change but the transformation does not, they may still look this way after they stop being it.

○ **THREE DICE OF EQUAL VALUE**

SUMMONING ☐=☐=☐

Call forth a demon or a shade from the Underworld.

On a glowing success: you may command them once; the GM will decide their capabilities. They are dispelled after taking 3 Wounds.

On a burning success: as on an 8–10. However, beings you did not choose also appear, not bound to your commands.

Choose carefully before adding this spell to your arsenal; it is rare to roll the dice that let you cast it.

You decide whether the being you summon is a demon or a shade. Although the GM decides exactly what they can do, they are mightier than a mortal.

The demon is a minor god, with domains of your choosing, so long as you pick ones that do not already belong to any Pantheon members or to sorcery itself. The shade may be someone you once knew, or anonymous to you; they remember their past life and can prophesy the future.

On a burning success (you roll a 5 and 6, or two 6s), the additional beings that manifest are of the same kind as the first. They do not negate the first being’s action—the one you commanded—but they may complicate it.

Sorcerer Doom Moves

○ FALSE MEMORIES

Take the Doom "who weaves new knowledge from nothing."

When you want the knowledge to solve a problem, mark Fire and invent a relevant piece of information from Atlantis, remembering it as if you had lived it. Your recalled information solves the problem. However, before this moment, it never happened. Describe a more recent memory of yours that it overwrites.

Once you take the Doom associated with this move, your Sorcerer's mind wanders frequently to the lost Atlantis they wish they had known. It feels real, full of people and places your adventurer recognizes. You can listen to scholarly speeches, examine arcane mechanisms, and explore vanished metropolises. These memories feel real, and the knowledge they grant is undeniably helpful. However, as the player, you know your Sorcerer is inserting themself into a history they never knew, giving themself impossible memories. Although no one else is likely to be able to correct you in the moment, you may later encounter a ruin, Pantheon member, shade, or last living Atlantean who provides a starkly contradictory account.

When you make this move, resist the urge to narrate a whole story in which only you participate; instead, skip to the valuable information that you glean from your false memory, with just enough context to make sense of it.

○ MAGUS

Take the Doom "who breaks the world open to get what they want."

Once per scene, when you cast a spell of your own invention, mark Fire, then describe one intended effect. The GM either inflicts a cost, describes a curse, or—if they decide it is too great for you to cast—changes the spell. Mark Fire again to bend the curse or changed spell to your goals.

Once you take the Doom associated with this move, you have learned how to craft new spells from the well of pure Chaos. Describe any one effect that you intend the spell to have.

However, you do not fully understand the spell you create. The GM picks 1:

- It costs you. The GM says how many Wounds you mark or Hearts you lose, and how it changes how people see you.
- It brings a curse. It destroys one or more people or breaks the cosmos in a lasting way.
- It transforms. If your spell would be so great as to spoil the story's dramatic tension, the GM may turn it into a different but related spell, adding complications to the story. The further you are on your arc of Doom, the greater the spell you may expect to cast.

The greater the spell's effect, the greater its cost or curse.

If the GM chooses a curse or changes the spell, you may mark Fire again to say how the GM's description actually works toward the reason you cast the spell. You may not nullify what the GM describes.

Resist the temptation to argue over it or get lawyerly in describing your spell. This move is about unintended consequences.

○ DISENCHANT

Take the Doom "who erases wonder."

Once per scene, when you want to prevent something supernatural or wonderful from working, mark Fire, then write down what the magic is. It no longer works, for anyone, now or ever.

Sometimes, the only way to nullify magic is with unmagic.

You can use Disenchant to break a spell, remove a specific ability of the Pantheon—like being able to shoot golden arrows of fire—or remove a sublime thing about the everyday world, such as the joy from seeing a sunset. You may also pick a preëxisting spell.

The **Magus** Doom Move, above, cannot undo the effects of Disenchant.

Whatever you change, it always makes the world more mundane, ordinary, and unremarkable. It probably cannot deglamorize something that is already boring; it certainly cannot make a boring thing more glamorous. If the GM feels you have not made the specific thing ordinary enough, they may add more effects.

Playing the Sorcerer

The Sorcerer's power puts them outside the bounds of most mortal society. Worse, it makes them an enemy of the Pantheon, because the Sorcerer wields the energies of Mother Chaos, which can unmake the Pantheon and even the world.

The Sorcerer is also a shapeshifter—sometimes deliberately, sometimes as the result of a spell gone awry. Their close association with chaos continually mutates and warps their flesh.

Randomness is always part of playing the Sorcerer. In theory, you're a scholar—master of the Atlantean language, researcher of ancient history, and collector of arcane spells. But that doesn't make your power precise or deliberate. You know just enough to be dangerous. Every time you cast sorcery, you can drastically change the scene, but you don't really know *how* it will change.

As you progress and learn more spells, your odds of casting **Chaos** because your dice don't match any of your known spells becomes less likely. However, the only way to have more of a *choice* in spells is to increase your Epithets' worth, so you have more dice to roll and can match more patterns. And when you roll more dice, you're more likely to roll snake eyes (a miss, which triggers **Chaos**) or two dice that sum to 11 or 12 (a burning success).

The only way to cast exactly the spell you want is by making the Doom move **Magus**. With it, you can cast any spell. But the GM always adds other effects to your spell, a small check on the move's enormous ability to change the story. The more you cast it, the closer you come to being a World Force, inhumanly powerful and monstrous.

Possible Warpings

When you change in response to using sorcery, roll six 6-sided dice on the table below. Cross out the result you get. If you roll one you already have, take it again or take the next closest available. Warping is wonderful—embrace your changing nature.

1 Touch spreads laughter
2 Touch spreads color
3 Moth wings
4 Glow with mood
5 Translucent, boneless body
6 Jewels for eyes
7 Float with mood
8 Sensitive to others' moods
9 Willowy, branching limb
10 Delicate fronds in place of hair
11 Extra joints in a limb
12 Unusually calming
13 Atlantean tattoos show your thoughts
14 Youthful appearance
15 Prehensile monkey's tail
16 Fish scales; color shifts with mood
17 Sensitive to metal
18 Optimistic
19 Sensitive to small noises
20 More graceful
21 Gender traits
22 More muscular
23 Hooves for feet
24 Reeking
25 Voice like the abyss
26 Thick lizard's tail
27 Aware of numerical patterns
28 Stony limb, branching like stalactites
29 Large spines covering your back
30 Thick rhinoceros hide
31 Cat's eyes
32 Aggressive
33 Beetle-like exoskeleton
34 Ram's horns on forehead
35 Falcon's beak
36 Gloomy
37 Rows of shark's teeth
38 Eagle talons for hands
39 Touch drains color
40 Touch spreads silence

THE SWORD

Life is simple at the point of a blade. You believe you can solve any problem with your strong arms—including protecting your friends. But your impulsiveness and capacity for violence sometimes hurt those you love. The World would eagerly grant you amnesty for your crimes if you'd submit, abandon your friends, and commit to channeling your violence toward the World's ends. Play to find out if you would sooner die for your friends or become a tyrant yourself.

Your Adventurer

Choose a name: Antaka, Ashme, Ekus, Daguna, Kiana, Ninug, Shagina, Tila, Uri, a strong name, a biting name, a protective name

Choose a weapon: a quick, short sword; an over-long Atlantean sword; a seven-foot spear; a wicked axe; a heavy mallet

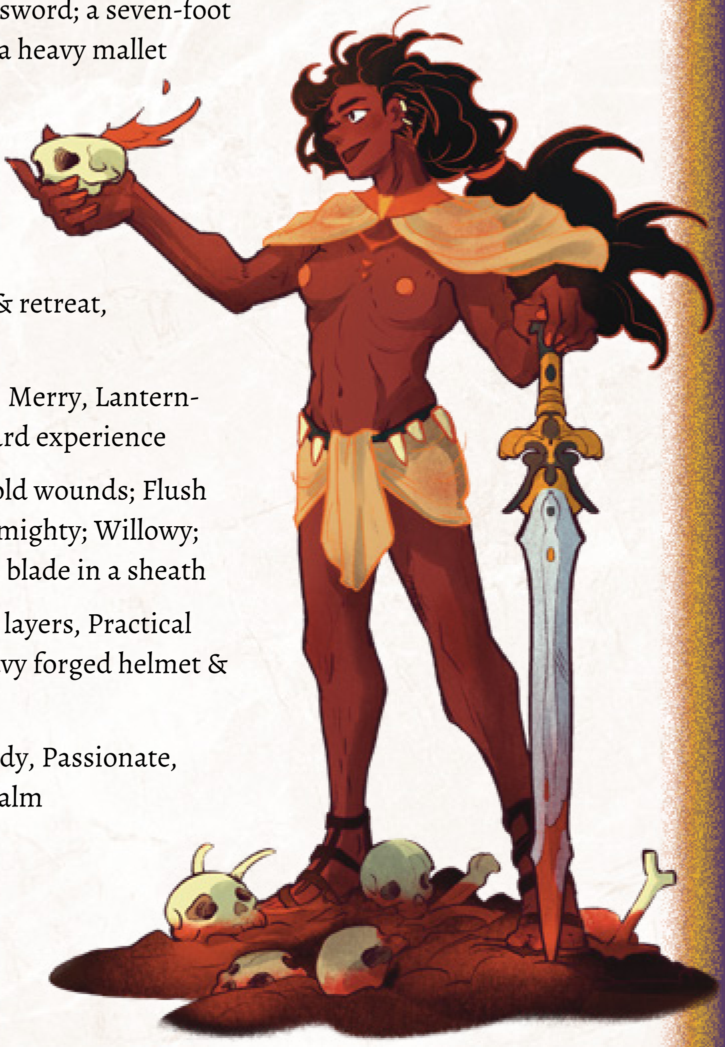
Describe your gender: Blade's keen edge, Hard knot of muscle, Bending like reeds, Rhythm of advance & retreat, Ambiguous, Other

Face: Focused, Feral, Merry, Lantern-jawed, Lined with hard experience

Body: Scarred with old wounds; Flush with youth; Stout & mighty; Willowy; Oiled; Hidden, like a blade in a sheath

Dress: Thick woolen layers, Practical leather harness, Heavy forged helmet & breastplate

Outlook: Stern, Moody, Passionate, Principled, Merry, Calm



Epithets

Suggested Epithets: who simplifies things with violence, who protects friends above themself, who never backs down from a challenge, who leaps first and asks questions later, who keeps their heart vulnerable, who kneels to no one, who needs no community other than their comrades, who celebrates the present moment

Relationship Questions

Using the prompts below as a guide, give 0–2 Hearts to each other adventurer.

- Whom do you protect, even though they wouldn't do the same for you?
- Who makes you want to forget the rest of the world and just carouse? Why can't you?
- Who thinks you have a gentler side? How have you tried to prove them wrong?

World Forces Questions

After creating the World Forces, answer 1 to 2 questions below:

- Who did you once kill who now waits for you to join them? How have you grown closer to them since they died? Give them 1 Heart.
- You were a proper City guard once. What happened? Who was your confidant and is now captain of the guard? Give them 1 Heart.
- When did you refuse to bow to a Pantheon member? Who was it, and why?

End of Session Questions

At the end of each session, mark 1 XP for each question you answer "yes":

- Did you express pure, unrestrained emotion?
- Did you leave wreckage in your wake?
- Did you keep your friends safe from danger?

Special Heart Move

You give your Heart easily. When you share a cup of wine or an intimate moment, give +1 Heart to anyone who offers something of theirs that you break in the process. Then clear all Wounds of all involved.

Sword Crisis

At the worst possible moment, your strength fails you. Your incompetence cannot protect your friends or even yourself. In this moment, you are just one of the weak at the mercy of the strong. Describe how you buckle and submit. The GM will say what further scar or irreversible loss you fail to prevent.

Change one Epithet to describe how ineffective you are. For instance, “Who simplifies things with violence” may become “Who oversimplifies things and misses the point.” After you do, increase its worth by 1 and clear your Wounds.

Sword Playbook Moves

At character creation, choose 2 more regular moves below, for a total of 4.

● END THE CONVERSATION

When not in combat, without rolling, you may summarily kill any one human-sized, mortal side character within arm’s reach.

Among the adventurers, the Sword rules the province of slaughter. You hold death in your hand. Others should recognize this in your mannerisms, your posture, and fear you.

Despite being ridiculously overpowered, **End the Conversation** usually causes more problems than it solves. You and the GM alike should lean into the uncontrollable, cascading consequences of killing someone. This is the *film noir* end of sword & sorcery: Every mortal side character has allies, underlings, sponsors, family and friends who may come looking for you. They may even return themself to haunt you as a shade.

Expect the GM to hold you to the move's constraints:

- Your target must be a side character. If, sadly, you want to kill one of your fellow adventurers, you may not use this move to do it.
- Your target must be approximately human-sized, though not necessarily human. It may be a human-sized animal, carnivorous plant, or revived Atlantean.
- Your target must be mortal. Shades, spirits, automata, or Pantheon members do not count.
- Your target must be within arm's reach. Let's not get into arguments about how far your spear can reach, or your sword. No-roll, surefire kills must be within your arm's reach. Similarly, if the GM retroactively says that someone was not as close as you'd imagined, accept the ruling with good humor.

Even with all that, it's surprising how much chaos you can cause with **End the Conversation**. If the GM forgets to keep important side characters away from you, they will remember after you derail their plot with this move enough times.

Kill a side character. Make the story messy.

● CLASH (FIGHTING MOVE)

When you attack with deadly force, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you inflict 1 Wound and take Wounds as directed. Pick 1:

- Spring back with honed reflexes: Take -1 Wound.
- Take an object from the enemy.
- Create an opening: Any who take advantage of it roll with +1 against their enemy.

On an 11+: your attack gets out of hand. Mark Fire, then deal at least 2 Wounds and take Wounds as directed. Pick 1 from the list above; the GM picks 1 from the list below:

- You break or lose something important.
- You Wound one of your friends by misfortune or carelessness.
- You defeat the enemy but reveal a worse one.

On a 7 or less: you fail to Wound the enemy, the fight escalates, and the enemy gets an opportunity.

When you make this move, you are setting in motion not just your attack but the entire exchange between you and your enemy. So, your roll determines both how many Wounds you inflict and how many you take.

If you defeat your enemy by inflicting the last Wound they can take, do not "take Wounds as directed." If you roll a burning success (11+), the GM still gets to pick from the second list, even if you know the enemy is about to die.

When the move says "take Wounds as directed," that could be 1, 2, or 3 Wounds, depending on how powerful and significant to the story they are—that is, how many Epithets they have. The GM should make clear before you commit to the move how many Wounds that is. (The GM should read Wounding the Adventurers: A Sense of Scale, page 171.)

When you choose to "take an object from the enemy," keep it within the bounds of the fiction, and in scale with the other options in the move. You can take the clay tablet bearing an encoded message, or seize the high ground, or cut the straps with which they hold their shield. You can't take their life, or their will to oppose you, or their desire for someone. When in doubt, a tangible object is the safest bet.

When you choose to "create an opening," you or a friend may take advantage of it. Be generous with the spotlight and give at least one of your friends a chance to use the opening before you do. Note that this only *adds* 1 to a roll, escalating things; it does not allow anyone to adjust their roll by subtracting from it. Narrate the opening that you create accordingly.

If you and another adventurer come to blows, make sure what you really want is to Wound them, physically or emotionally. If you're just trying to prove a point, **Entice** them, **Figure Them Out**, or **Bolt** past them, do that instead. Fighting between two adventurers is not how this game is supposed to go, but sometimes it happens. When deciding how many Wounds to take, the attacking adventurer still inflicts 1, but the opposing adventurer inflicts a number of Wounds consistent with how many Epithets they have, so even when attacking a beginning adventurer, you might take 2 Wounds in a single use of **Clash**, at the GM's discretion.

○ CUT THE GORDIAN KNOT

When you use violence or brute force to "solve" a problem that does not lend itself to force, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: your rash action actually improves the situation; describe how.

On an 11+: you force the situation to fit your ruthless vision for its own good; the GM will describe additional unforeseen effects.

On a 7 or less: you only make things worse; the GM will say how.

The Sword is, among other things, a bull blundering through porcelain. This move leans into that.

Cut the Gordian Knot is not for all problems, only those that don't lend themselves to force—delicate subjects, puzzles, diplomatic tensions, etc. If you want to solve the problem of a warlord by assassinating them in a mountain pass, choose **Clash** or (if you can get close enough) **End the Conversation**. If you want to solve the problem of finding a way out of a fight, choose **Bolt** or **Explore**.

On a glowing success (8–10), things actually work out for the better; this still doesn't mean they work out how anyone foresaw, including you. When time allows, describe a favorable but messy result, full of broken pottery and spilled milk (or blood). Allow the GM to tone it down, if they really must.

On a burning success (11+), be a tyrant about the problem. The first thing to break is your grasp of the situation. You are doing everyone else a favor, even if they can't see it. The more straightforwardly you improve things on a burning success (11+), the more you should expect the GM to pile on undesirable consequences.

○ I AM MAGNIFICENT

When you pause to strike a dramatic pose, say how you show off your impressive physicality, then invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: you look amazing, inspiring your friends or astounding your enemies. Describe how, then take 1 Heart from a friend or enemy, or Wound an enemy.

On an 11+: you terrify friends and enemies alike. Mark Fire. Your enemy takes 1 Wound, but one of your friends takes 1 Wound as well, unless you mark another Fire.

On a 7 or less: you show more vulnerability than glory; take 1 Wound.

When you swing on a chandelier across a room full of guards, or slide along a bar while shooting arrows, you are triggering this move. You may also trigger it by pausing for a fourth wall-breaking moment to mug for the audience.

However your body is shaped, it is stunning. On a perfect roll, it rallies your friends' morale or panics your enemies. Choose which one it does more, and for whom, and take a Heart from that person. Presumably, you would use a friend's Heart to **Influence** them positively, and an enemy's Heart to **Influence** them negatively. But the rules don't restrict you.

On a burning success (11+), your physique and overall bearing strike terror in everyone watching. From sheer panic, your enemy marks 1 emotional Wound, but the GM will choose a friend who is present to take 1 emotional Wound as well. You can protect your friend from taking a Wound by marking another Fire; this represents you, in a godlike aspect, reassuring a friend as you would a worshiper.

ON WATCH

When you think others are paying attention to the wrong things, describe what you see an enemy doing or about to do, then invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you catch someone in the act, interrupt them, and make a competent rebuttal. If what you catch is danger, you roll with +1 to respond.

On an 11+: you "catch" someone whose guilt is debatable. No matter: treat them as if they clearly meant ill. If what you "catch" is danger, you roll with +1 to respond.

On a 7 or less: the action is happening, but you see it too late. Leave an opening instead.

This move gives you license to narrate something new into the story. If the other players are getting into a mystical tête-à-tête with a being of dream, or hashing it out with a side character who doesn't mean anything to you, you can use **On Watch** to make something actually interesting happen.

No matter what, and before you roll, you should narrate an action by a person (or creature or immortal)—somebody is *doing* something. And the thing they're doing should be unwelcome, even if not actively harmful.

While the GM should welcome reasonable additions to the story, be ready to negotiate your offering with them. This will go easier if you don't negate what others have already brought to the scene, including the GM. If your friend the Sailor is arguing with a trader in the local caravanserai, you'll honor the other player's investment better by narrating an aggressive client who wants to get the trader's attention than by introducing a pack of ghouls who break down the door—or, worse, a Pantheon member who stomps the whole building flat.

On a burning success (11+), the roll leaves up for debate whether the action you notice was actually happening, or occurring with the intent you imagined. Narrate what your adventurer *believes* is happening, then give it to the GM to determine what actually is.

Even if it is truly what your adventurer believed, there should be enough room for the other adventurers to doubt you.

On a miss (7-), the action you notice is happening, and the intent is as you believed, but you do not notice in time. Narrate what it is and give it to the GM to determine its effects, which won't be pretty.

○ SCATTER LIKE LEAVES

When you make the Clash move against a group of anonymous enemies, use these intensified results instead:
On an 8–10: you kill or disperse all of them. Others may be approaching, but none are currently in combat range. Any named enemies remain.

On an 11+: you kill or disperse all of them. Others may be approaching, but none are currently in combat range. Any named enemies remain. However, you also break or lose something enormous or crucial, Wound two of your friends, or reveal an enemy who puts you in immediate danger.

On a 7 or less: the whole enemy group overwhelms you, putting you and your friends at a disadvantage, albeit without your taking extra Wounds.

This move doesn't require a roll; it simply expands the scale of what you can do when faced with anonymous enemies.

The rules already let the damage you inflict spill over from one 0-Epithet side character to another. With this move, on a single use of **Clash**, you rebuff all the 0-Epithet side characters who were attacking you or your friends. It also works with another playbook's fighting move, if you take it—but not with **End the Conversation** or any other fighting move that doesn't involve rolling. There must be a roll involved where you could get a miss (7-).

Taking this move signals to the GM that you want to take on swarms; you want to oppose armies. It won't defeat the whole army at once, but it will take out all those who were in range with hand weapons. Play up the cinematic aspect of the fights.

Sword Doom Moves

○ WEAPON OF THE AGES

Take the Doom "who does their weapon's bidding."

You have a famous weapon. It has a soul, and it talks to you. It cannot be affected by Pantheon members or sorcery. When you gain this move, give the weapon a name and at least 1 Heart. When the weapon suggests you harm someone, and you have a violent exchange that includes inflicting a Wound on that person, mark XP. When you defeat a named enemy with it, mark Fire.

Note that you mark Fire only when defeating a *named* enemy. Nameless mooks don't count.

The GM controls the weapon's character—what they say and how they think—but you, the Sword's player, control how you wield the weapon.

Living weapons are predisposed to inflicting harm. It is their purpose, after all. When you gain a weapon with a mind, expect it to encourage you to ever-increasing violence.

○ MONSTROUS STRENGTH

Take the Doom "who breaks things to test their strength."

When you want to lift or move something that no mortal could budge, or otherwise use nearly limitless strength, mark Fire. The GM will say what you destroy in the process. Mark another Fire to avoid destroying anything, but describe how your display of strength horrifies those around you.

Once you take this Doom, monstrous strength sometimes overcomes you, surging through your muscles supernaturally and giving you a demonic aspect. Even when you don't make the move, you might unintentionally snap some delicate thing, scaring those close to you.

○ CONQUEROR

Take the Doom "who tramples the weak."

When you face formidable opposition, mark Fire. Warriors bearing your standard rush in and defeat your enemy, then rampage to their liking unless you mark Fire again. Describe how you become more suited to the throne they fight to win you. After the battle, the GM will decide if your army grows or shrinks.

Once you take the Doom associated with this move, you become a commander and a cause. You gain a standard—a symbol on a staff. Ask the GM what it is. A growing number of bloodthirsty warriors rally to it; they believe in you. If it is at all plausible, they will materialize at your call.

The problem is what they do afterward: They are only tenuously under your control, unless you mark Fire a second time. Then your wardogs heel, albeit reluctantly.

Expect the GM to make problems out of how this army finds food and beer, what plague might arise from their midst, and their independent strategic goals. Expect to hear reports from offstage that they are waging battles you never asked them to fight. Whether or not these battles ever gain you territory, know that while you live, they will not bring you peace.

Playing the Sword

The Sword is direct, honest, aggressive, and mistrustful of authority. Despite this, they love generously and with an open heart. By playing them, you're ensuring violence and its consequences will be a prominent part of the game.

The Sword tends to approach problems as simpler than they are. They like to solve problems one way: by intimidating, harming, or killing the perceived source of the problem. This works less well when people stay outside their arm's reach or use laws and customs as a shield.

They are also stymied by the mystical forces in the world: the Pantheon, the Atlanteans, and Death. These resist the Sword's direct approach. However, they also promise the Sword a way to extend their reach—for a cost.

If you want to play the Sword as a himbo—strong, sweet, clueless, and eager to help—the playbook welcomes that approach. Or you may play them as the prototypical surly outlander, like Conan. Or a fierce, protective sword lesbian. Any way you choose, your physical prowess will be your greatest asset and liability, and your friends will be your greatest strength and vulnerability.

The Sword's starting move, **End the Conversation**, makes lethal violence easy. It also showcases the friction between the Sword and society: When you kill someone others care about, you've kicked a pebble that could start an avalanche. Alternatively, when you kill someone nobody cares about, their fall into instant oblivion is a chilling, cautionary tale.

The World—the City, the Wilds, the Pantheon—prices some lives cheaply and others dearly. Play the Sword to find out who falls into which category.

The move **Cut the Gordian Knot** is another way for you to explore violence's limits when it comes to solving problems. It encourages you to lean into the Sword's tendency to see everything as a "nail" for their "hammer."

All the Sword's Doom moves make them stronger and deadlier. With **Conqueror**, the Sword starts on a path toward becoming the kind of tyrant they always despised.

THE VESSEL

You love and serve a minor god—your patron. They love you, inhabit you, and possess you. In return for giving them control, you receive some of their power. This bond sometimes isolates you from your friends, but you know your patron can show a path forward for all of you. The World's Pantheon hates your patron and your unusually intense relationship. They seek to bind your capacity for submission in service to a proper god.

Your Adventurer

Choose a Name: Anusan, Ashag, Dagizi, Dezir, Izila, Liliz, Namusan, Uanna, Zalana, a name given by your god, a proud name, an empty name

Choose your patron: Arahax, lord of razors; Sunagil, liege of dry riverbeds; Lemesh, lady of hopeless wishes; Gunazu, mocker of time; Igdama, liege of secret tunnels; a demanding being; a cursed being; a puppeteer

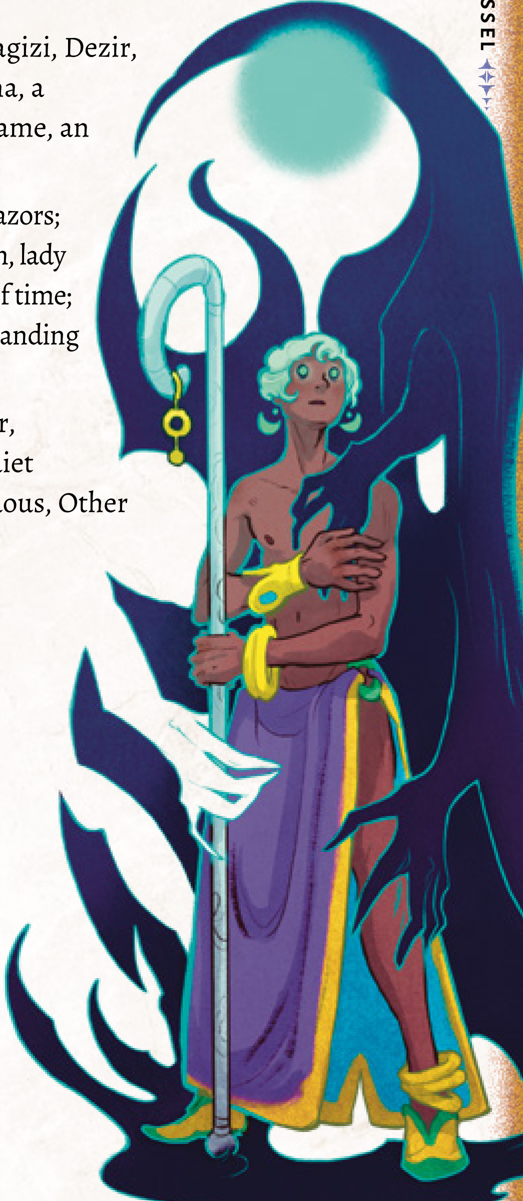
Describe your gender: Evening star, Firebird, Clay jug, Cornerstone, Quiet moment, Wilderness path, Ambiguous, Other

Eyes: Dark-shadowed, Clear & far-seeing, Worried, Fiery, Peaceful & kind, Unseeing

Body: Ascetic, Prosperous, Quick, Gnarled, Well-exercised

Accessories: Magnificently dyed robes, Secrets inscribed on clay tablets, Shepherd's crook, Staff of ancient wood, Chiming gold bracelets, Weapon of my patron

Outlook: Dancing alone, Lashed by furies, Proud to serve, Full of lived experience, Harkening to otherworldly music



Epithets

Suggested Epithets: who submits only to whom they choose; who does what their patron commands; who feels safest in immortal communion; who sees the world from a god's perspective; who, when finally giving their heart, gives it utterly; who pursues a purer world; who transmits messages from beyond; who seeks to disappear into their patron's voice

Relationship Questions

Using the prompts below as a guide, give 0–2 Hearts to each other adventurer.

- Whom do you trust almost as much as your patron? What do you trust them with?
- Who shows interest in you just to get to your patron? Do you see what's really going on?
- Who shared a dream with you and your patron? What warning did your patron give to both of you?

World Forces Questions

After creating the World Forces, answer 1 to 2 questions below:

- Who among the Pantheon hates your patron? When did this start?
- Who among the City's "proper" cults seems to have the life you want? Why? Give them 1 Heart, even though they disdain you.
- How did your patron protect you from a divinely sent plague? Why has your survival enraged Death?

End of Session Questions

At the end of each session, mark 1 XP for each question you answer "yes":

- Did you demonstrate your patron's power?
- Did your bond with your patron distance you from others?
- Did you communicate with otherworldly forces?

Special Heart Move

When, in a moment of peace, you commune with your patron, ask who will join with you in communion and give you or your patron +1 Heart. Then clear all Wounds of all involved.

Vessel Crisis

Your patron betrays your trust, leaving you unprotected when you need them the most. How could they ever truly love you? In this moment, your injuries don't exalt you; they merely hurt. Describe what drab, shabby things you see in the people around you without your patron's aura. The GM will say how your patron thoughtlessly hurts or damages the most innocent and fragile around you.

Change one Epithet to describe how exposed and weak you feel. For instance, "Who submits only to whom they choose" may become "Who only submits." After you do, increase its worth by 1 and clear your Wounds.

Vessel Miracles

At character creation, choose 2 more Miracles below, for a total of 4.

Immortal Exchange:

Your patron's power flows through you, but at a cost. To perform a Miracle, invoke an Epithet and roll, as with other moves. However, you may use only *Wounded* Epithets for Miracles. Unlike your Basic Moves or any other playbook's moves, when invoking a Wounded Epithet to perform a Miracle, you add its full, *un-Wounded worth* to your die roll. You may choose to Wound an Epithet immediately before performing a Miracle.

● RESPITE

When you want your patron to soothe you, invoke a Wounded Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: you feel your patron's soothing presence; unmark 1 Wound. Your patron's domains manifest around you in subtle ways for a moment, preventing harm to you and all within arm's reach. The effect gives you time to make one more move safely.

On an 11+: you get lost in your patron's soothing presence; unmark all Wounds. Your patron's domains manifest around you dramatically for a moment, preventing harm to you but inflicting it on someone else of the GM's choosing. The effect gives you time to make one more move safely.

On a 7 or less: your patron's domains manifest around you, but in a way that harms you. Mark 1 Wound.

Your patron loves you for the Wounds you suffer, but they are invested not only in your pain. When your patron is pleased with you, they reward you with succor and peace—peace your friends may share.

However, when you fail to live up to their expectations, your patron doles out punishment.

On a burning success (11+), your patron heals you completely. However, your friends may suffer.

● FURY (FIGHTING MOVE)

When you release your patron's wrath, invoke a Wounded Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: one of your patron's domains erupts from your body in the direction you're facing. Everyone in your path marks 1 Wound. If an enemy can reach you, take Wounds as directed.

On an 11+: one of your patron's domains erupts from your body in all directions. Mark 1 Wound and mark Fire. Everyone near you marks 1 Wound. If an enemy can reach you, take Wounds as directed. A trace of your patron's power remains, coloring your other actions in this scene.

On a 7 or less: one of your patron's domains erupts from your body, but without Wounding anyone.

Sometimes, your patron grows angry. Then you are their instrument, their sword.

When one of your patron's domains erupts from you, you may interpret the nature of the domain literally or metaphorically. It spills from your body without harming you (except on a burning success, 11+). The eruption's range is relatively near, according to the GM's discretion.

When you make this move, you are setting in motion not just your attack but also your enemy's counter-attack. "If an enemy can reach you" means during this exchange.

If you defeat your enemy by inflicting the last Wound they can take, do not "take Wounds as directed."

When the move says "take Wounds as directed," that could be 1, 2, or 3 Wounds, depending on how powerful and significant to the story they are—that is, how many Epithets they have. The GM should make clear before you commit to the move how many Wounds that is. (The GM should read Wounding the Adventurers: A Sense of Scale, page 171.)

If you and another adventurer come to blows, make sure what you really want is to Wound them, physically or emotionally. If you're just trying to prove a point, **Entice** them, **Figure Them Out**, or **Bolt** past them, do that instead. Fighting between two adventurers is not how this game is supposed to go, but sometimes it happens. When deciding how many Wounds to take, the attacking adventurer still inflicts 1, but the opposing adventurer inflicts a number of Wounds consistent with how many Epithets they have, so even when attacking a beginning adventurer, you might take 2 Wounds in a single use of **Fury**, at the GM's discretion.

○ PROMISE

When you call on your patron's protection, invoke a Wounded Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: rewind time to change a miss (7-) to a glowing success (8–10). Everyone still remembers the miss's effects.

On an 11+: mark 1 Wound. Rewind time to change a miss (7-) or glowing success (8–10) to a burning success (11+). The GM, acting as your patron, may change one other result in this scene by one result band, now or later. Everyone recalls the moves' initial effects.

On a 7 or less: your patron changes one past or future result to a miss (7-) in this scene, visiting horrors on you.

With this move, your patron can reach through you to alter fate and time itself. The experience of remembering an alternate past is jarring and uncomfortable for everyone. The Miracle does not change *everything* in the recent past—only the result of one move.

On a miss (7-) or a burning success (11+), the GM has discretion as to what move result (or additional move result) to change, but it must be in this scene. If you reach the end of the scene and the GM hasn't exercised this privilege yet, resolve it before moving on. If you and the GM agree there is no good fit, accept another misfortune, like marking 1 Wound or losing an important Heart.

○ PURITY

When you want to wash the world clean, invoke a Wounded Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: immortal power flows from you. Change whoever or whatever you were facing to fit your patron's judgment or be more like one of your patron's domains.

On an 11+: mark 1 Wound. Immortal power blazes from you. Change yourself and whoever was looking upon you to fit your patron's judgment or be more like one of your patron's domains.

On a 7 or less: your patron changes you to be more like one of their domains. Describe how.

This move is about making others, your surroundings, or yourself be more to your patron's liking. "Washed clean" is not an absolute good but a relative term, pure as your patron defines it. They want to repaint the world, and you are their brush.

○ TOKEN

When you want a sign of your patron's favor, invoke a Wounded Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: your face shows a glowing token of your patron, visible only to their followers. When you encounter them, they respond as if you **ENTICED** them with a glowing success (8–10).

On an 11+: mark 1 Wound. Your face shows a glowing token of your patron, visible to their followers and enemies. They seek you out from near or far, and respond as if you **ENTICED** them with a burning success (11+).

On a 7 or less: your face shows a glowing token of your patron, visible only to their enemies, who seek you out.

This token is a mark or sign that shows others that you belong to your patron. Your patron's followers and enemies are most likely mortals, but the GM may interpret this broadly.

On a glowing success (8–10), your patron's followers notice you when you run across them, but on a burning success (11+) or a miss (7-), they are drawn to find you, through a longing they may not be able to explain. The token shines from you only for this scene, but the GM may say that someone finds you now or in a later scene. The more often you perform this Miracle, the more people are likely to find you.

On a glowing or burning success, you gain the advantage of an **Entice** move with the same result. On a miss (7-), you must deal with your patron's enemies without the benefit of the **Entice**. Prepare for the worst.

○ VIEW FROM ON HIGH

When you want to see the world through your patron's eyes, invoke a Wounded Epithet and roll. You gain their exalted perspective and briefly know what they know.
On an 8–10: you descend, still holding a scrap of immortal knowledge. Ask the GM 1 below:

- What does the future hold if we stay on this path?
- How can we change the future, if at all?
- What does my patron know about ________?
- What advantage can we gain over the threat we face?
- What does my patron fear here?

On an 11+: you do not fully return. Mark 1 Wound and mark Fire. Ask the GM 1 above. The GM will continue to give you stabs of disorienting, divine sight until Downtime or a special Heart move.

On a 7 or less: your brief vision only bewilders you. The GM will describe one searing image that stays with you.

When you perform this Miracle, you lose your sight for a moment and gain your patron's, as if you were on a mountaintop. This is a heady, overwhelming experience, and you can make sense of only a small glimpse. On a burning success (11+), the disorientation of this vista continues, perhaps with additional information or just with colors and emotional impressions, according to the GM's discretion. Similarly, on a miss (7-), you may glean information from the image that the GM describes, but you don't get to distill it into a question.

Vessel Doom Moves

○ LEASH AND LASH

Take the Doom "who commands immortal power."

When you want to command your patron for a change, mark Fire. For a moment, you can manipulate one of your patron's domains as you please in your immediate surroundings; describe how. How does your patron feel betrayed?

By taking this move, you may invert the one constant in your life—that you do your patron's bidding. When you make this move, it is your patron who serves you. This may be a welcome role reversal, or your patron may submit to you only unwillingly. These feelings may change each time it happens, according to your discretion and the GM's.

○ LOVER'S DRAIN

Take the Doom "who steals heavenly fire."

When you feed on your patron's vitality, mark Fire. Unmark all your Wounds as you fill with immortal might. Then, you may invoke an un-Wounded Epithet to perform one Miracle. How does your patron show reluctance to answer your next call?

Normally, *your* suffering exalts you. When you make this move, you break down this dynamic, exalting yourself by your patron's suffering. It is up to your discretion whether this poisons the connection between you the next time you want to please them.

○ SERVE TWO MASTERS

Take the Doom "who makes rivals of the gods."

Invent another immortal patron to serve. When you call on them instead of your first patron, mark Fire, then perform the Miracle as if you had rolled a glowing success (8–10), using a new domain that you assign to the new patron. Expect your life to be the battleground over which your patrons fight.

When you first make this move, you must invent a new immortal. Subsequent times, you may choose to invent a different immortal, but you may never call on a Pantheon member. Eventually, you may create a whole new pantheon to channel. Are they older or younger than the existing Pantheon?

Each time you make this move, you must assign a new domain to the immortal you're calling upon, whether they are new or existing. You may invent the domain, or take one that belonged to a Pantheon member or your original patron. When an immortal no longer has any domains of their own, you have dethroned them and crowned a new, potentially troublesome immortal.

Playing the Vessel

The Vessel is defined by sacrifice and devotion to their patron. To commune with their patron, receive the patron's power, and perform Miracles on the patron's behalf, the Vessel must endure harm physically or emotionally—that is, take Wounds. They can either capitalize on harm they've suffered in combat or harm themself anew. Either way, they suffer for their patron's sake.

The Vessel must strike a balancing act, taking enough Wounds to be powerful but not so many that they reach their Crisis.

Their patron is not necessarily moral or just. However, they genuinely care for the Vessel. They can heal the Vessel of one or more Wounds with the **Respite** Miracle. When you roll a miss (7-) on a Miracle, it means the Vessel has not shown sufficient devotion, displeasing or perhaps merely boring their patron.

Many Miracles refer to the patron's domains. Although one domain is already defined in the pick list of patrons, you may give them up to three more unclaimed domains after the world-building in Session Zero.

When the Vessel gains Doom moves, the power dynamic reverses, straining the relationship. **Leash and Lash** hands you the reins of one of your patron's domains; **Lover's Drain** heals you at the patron's expense. But it is **Serve Two Masters** that may eventually usurp the Pantheon's thrones with a pantheon of your own invention. Each domain is like an immortal's Epithet, and removing one is like Wounding them. Using the other two Doom moves, you may bind the new immortal to you, but you may be bound to them as well.

THE WOLFLING

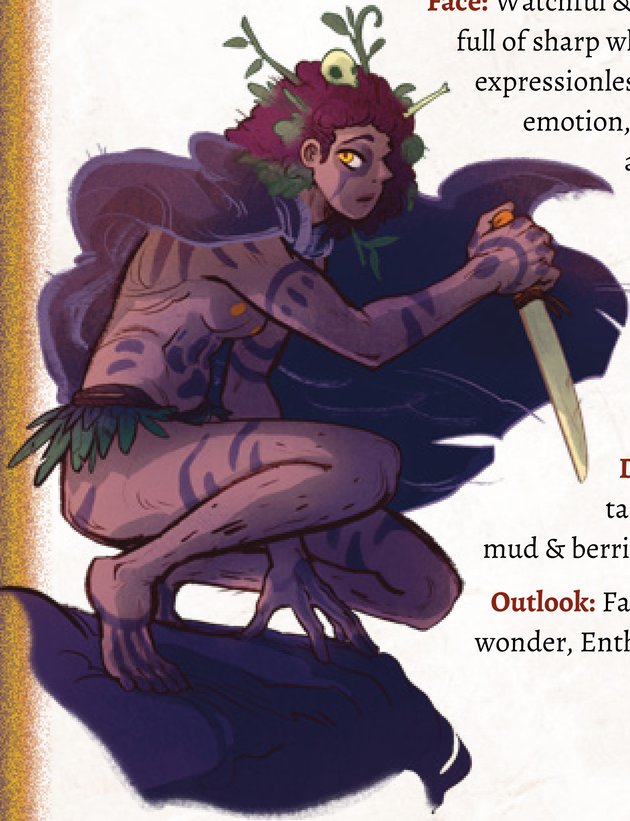
You are wild. Though you were born human, giant animals raised you as their own child. You have found a new, human community with your friends, even if you sometimes act in ways they don't understand. The World sees you as ugly and wrong. It wants to tame you, civilize you, fit you into just one category or the other, and wash away all the subtlety of who you are.

Your Adventurer

Choose a name: Adea, Emeshul, Kiru, Lahmer, Radlum, Sisig, Tirtur, Umer, Zagin, a fierce name, a nuzzling name, a human name in place of my unpronounceable real name

Describe your gender: Sun's first golden rays, Flood, Lightning on the cliff, Moon phase, Iron tang of blood, First fiddlehead fern, Changing with the seasons, Unmarked, Other

Choose your foster parent: Urbarra of the Wolf Clan, Ntwadumela of the Lion Clan, Gouronu of the Boar Clan, Suat of the Cat Clan, Piru of the Elephant Clan, Basmu of the Serpent Clan, Hurin of the Eagle Clan, Gudra of the Bull Clan, Ephis of the Dolphin Clan



Face: Watchful & staring eyes, Mouth full of sharp white teeth, Inscrutable & expressionless, Full of unrestrained emotion, Subtly expressive as if your ears could move, Snarling

Body: Lean as bone, Thick as a rhino, Gracile as a cheetah, Sinuous & coiled, Solid & round, Hidden & camouflaged

Dress: Furs, Horns & hide & tail, Tree bark, Striped with mud & berries, Unadorned

Outlook: Fatalistic, Pitiless, Full of wonder, Enthusiastic, Analytical

Epithets

Suggested Epithets: who refuses to conform, who speaks honestly to those they respect, who trusts their instincts, who dances in time with the natural world, who is ready to learn unfamiliar ways, who sheds no tears for the dead or the past, who keeps their intentions concealed, who will chew through their leg rather than be trapped

Relationship Questions

Using the prompts below as a guide, give 0–2 Hearts to each other adventurer.

- Who once stopped you from breaking a serious law? What did it cost them?
- Who embodies your idea of "human"? Why them?
- Whom have you shown a place in the Wilds that's special to you? Why did you do it?

World Forces Questions

After creating the World Forces, answer 1 to 2 questions below:

- Who among the City's wealthy and fabulous makes you wish you could "pass" as a civilized human? Why? Give them 1 Heart.
- What forbidden place in the Wilds did you once trespass? Who won't forgive you?
- What did you bring with you from an Atlantean ruin? How is it getting harder to keep it a secret?

End of Session Questions

At the end of each session, mark 1 XP for each question you answer "yes":

- Did you help a human embrace their feral side?
- Did you understand your place in the Wilds better?
- Did you confront a human with the senselessness of their ways?

Special Heart Move

When, in an intimate moment, you run wild with one or more others, ask if they will give the Wilds +1 Heart. If someone says yes, give them +1 Heart. If any do not, give +1 Heart to the Wilds, your one true ally. Then clear all Wounds of all involved.

Wolfling Crisis

You are caught out in the open with nobody to protect you. A freak without family, who could ever offer you a home? In this moment, you are beneath contempt, something best killed but not eaten. Describe how your failure to understand the world causes problems. The GM will say how the natural world turns its back on you.

Change one Epithet to describe your out-of-place and unlovable nature. For instance, "Who refuses to conform" may become "Who can never do the right thing." After you do, increase its worth by 1 and clear your Wounds.

Wolfling Playbook Moves

At character creation, choose 2 more regular moves below, for a total of 4.

● SMELL THE TRUTH

When you attune to your heightened animal senses, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you smell or otherwise sense something true. Ask the GM 1 of the following:

- Is this person telling the truth?
- What does this person intend?
- What is about to happen that others don't see?
- The GM will answer. If the answer foretells danger, you roll with +1 to respond.

On an 11+: you smell or otherwise sense the truth about more than you wanted. Ask the GM 1 above and 1 from the list below:

- What hurtful secret has been kept from me?
- What tragic, unstoppable event has been set in motion?

On a 7 or less: ask yourself 1 from the first list. Your senses tell you only what you want to believe.

On a glowing success (8–10), you can only ask about people or events in the scene with you, in your immediate surroundings. Similarly, on a burning success (11+), the secret or event is near you right now; others may be able to stop it, but nobody who is in the scene with you.

On a miss (7-), answer your own question. You are convinced of the truth of what you sense. It is up to the GM whether that is objectively true or not.

● MAUL (FIGHTING MOVE)

When you attack with ferocity, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you inflict 1 Wound and take Wounds as directed. Choose 1:

- Nimbly evade their blows: Take -1 Wound.
- Roar: Draw all eyes to you. If your enemy knows fear, give your friends +1 to their fighting moves against them.
- Dart away: After exchanging blows, escape your enemy's sight. Gain +1 to your next move against them, if you are still hidden.

On an 11+: you enter a blood rage, heedless of your own safety. Inflict 1 Wound and take Wounds as directed. Inflict +1 Wound for each additional Wound you choose to take. Roll with +1 to Maul until the conflict ends.

On a 7 or less: you fail to Wound your enemy, and the fight escalates. Prepare for the worst.

On a glowing success (8–10), you have options: avoid harm, inflict extra harm if your enemy can be demoralized, or set yourself up for a better move later.

In that last case, you get +1 to your next move against the enemy, if you are plausibly somewhere they can't see you. Making this move generally reveals your position, or at least removes the element of surprise.

On a burning success (11+), your fierce rage propels you forward until the conflict ends. The +1 is cumulative: every time you roll a burning success on **Maul**, you gain an additional +1 to **Maul**. But you may not need to keep fighting, if you are willing to suffer additional harm.

When you make this move, you are setting in motion not just your attack but the entire exchange between you and your enemy. So, your roll determines both how many Wounds you inflict and how many you take.

If you defeat your enemy by inflicting the last Wound they can take, do not "take Wounds as directed."

When the move says "take Wounds as directed," that could be 1, 2, or 3 Wounds, depending on how powerful and significant to the story they are—that is, how many Epithets they have. The GM should make clear before you commit to the move how many Wounds that is. (The GM should read Wounding the Adventurers: A Sense of Scale, page 171.)

If you and another adventurer come to blows, make sure what you really want is to Wound them, physically or emotionally. If you're just trying to prove a point, **Entice** them, **Figure Them Out**, or **Bolt** past them, do that instead. Fighting between two adventurers is not how this game is supposed to go, but sometimes it happens. When deciding how many Wounds to take, the attacking adventurer still inflicts 1, but the opposing adventurer inflicts a number of Wounds consistent with how many Epithets they have, so even when attacking a beginning adventurer, you might take 2 Wounds in a single use of **Maul**, at the GM's discretion.

○ HEART OF THE WILDS

When you are in a Wild place, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you know this place and its laws. Say when you were last here. Adjust by +/-1 any rolls to Explore here or interact with its creatures.

On an 11+: you have contempt for this place and its laws. Say why the creatures here are beneath you. Mark Fire, and add +1 to any rolls to Explore here or interact with its creatures.

On a 7 or less: this place and its laws are strange to you. The GM will say how you or your friends have stepped wrong or transgressed against a creature here.

When you are in the Wilds, you have the potential to guide your friends through dangerous places and negotiate with the creatures there. In that way, this move is like **Entice** for a location.

The definition of a "place" is up to the GM. It may be just where the current scene is taking place, or it may be the larger habitat, depending on what makes sense dramatically.

The +/-1 on a glowing success (8–10) and the +1 on a burning success (11+) are valid going forward, at least until you offend a creature here or the place changes substantially. Write the place on your playbook and the kind of bonus you have with it. You may collect several places like this.

On a miss (7-), your knowledge fails you, and something bad is already happening. It may be environmental—quicksand, a crumbling ledge, or a storm about to break. Or it may be a creature here—you've stepped too close to its den or nest, taken something that belongs to it, or just may be its imminent prey. Whatever it is, this is when you become aware of it—too late to prevent it. The GM will describe what happens.

○ DOMINANCE DISPLAY

When you want a side character to defer to you, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: choose: they either give you 1 Heart and submit, or withdraw for now.

On an 11+: you instill fear in them. Mark Fire. They give you 1 Heart, then follow you closely or get as far away as possible.

On a 7 or less: your display arouses the attention of a mightier being. The GM will say how.

This move is for avoiding conflict through proving your dominance. If you resolve this and attack the side character anyway, make the **Maul** move.

This move is for side characters. If you want an adventurer to do something, make the **Entice** or **Influence** move.

○ CHAMELEON

When you want to change how people see you, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you camouflage yourself—becoming hidden or seeming to be someone else—for the duration of the scene or until you act in conflict with your disguise.

On an 11+: you are fabulously yourself, too singular to change. Mark Fire. You draw all eyes to you—and away from whatever your friends are doing.

On a 7 or less: you stand out awkwardly, leaving yourself vulnerable. The GM will say what happens.

Your disguise may use a costume or props, or it may just be in how you speak and carry yourself.

Work within the truth of what you have established about your Wolfling so far. For instance, on a glowing success (8–10), if you are wearing nothing but stripes of mud and berry juice, it would be easier to hide yourself than to seem like someone else.

On a burning success (11+), the move flips: You are not hiding, but attracting attention in in an effective way, giving the other adventurers an opening.

On a miss (7-), you fail to hide, and if you make a scene, it is not to your advantage.

○ UGLY THING

When you have a chance to interfere with an object or plan made by humans or Atlanteans, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you disable the thing or foil the endeavor, to the extent you have control over it in this scene.

On an 11+: you create havoc, destroying the thing or plan utterly, and cause more consequences that you didn't intend.

On a 7 or less: the thing or plan snaps its jaws shut on you; the GM will say how.

Applying this move to an object is straightforward: You disable or destroy it, or it harms you. The way you interfere with a plan requires more imagination. You have free rein to describe it in a way consistent with your result, but the GM also has discretion to ask you to go another way if they feel like what you're describing is implausible.

Wolfling Doom Moves

○ BECOMING ANIMAL

Take the Doom "who trades away their humanity."

When you give up something human about yourself in exchange for one of the physical gifts of your adopted family, say what each is, then mark Fire.

You can cross the gulf separating you from your animal family, but only at the cost of something human that connects you with your fellow adventurers. If the exchange doesn't feel costly enough, the GM may push you to give up something more.

You permanently gain abilities that may be mechanically significant: Claws mean you are never disarmed; wings may let you fly, but make it impossible to disguise yourself using the **Chameleon** move.

○ WILD AVENGER

Take the Doom "who rages alongside the Wilds."

When you want the Wilds to make someone pay, mark Fire and summon a giant, rampaging creature or elemental. It has 3 Epithets: Who Rampages Out of Control, Who Hates Humans, and Who Grieves the Lost Wilds. Gain +1 Heart from it. It will destroy indiscriminately. Mark another Fire to make the avenger return to whence it came.

You can summon a beast or elemental force from the depths of the Wilds. It may be the same elemental each time, miraculously regenerated. If it is a creature, it is likely a new one. Once the Avenger is defeated, do not expect the GM to let you summon a new one immediately.

○ REMAKE THE CITY

Take the Doom "the wild tyrant."

When you want to wild the City, mark Fire. Wilderness encroaches on a district of the City, whether suddenly or so slow no one notices. Beasts, birds, and other creatures arrive with the new landscape. Mark another Fire to keep your friends safe from the overflowing natural landscape, or to set firm boundaries on the new area.

The City's time has come. No more can they maintain the careful, severe boundary between civilization and the Wilds. This move does not destroy the entire City, but it deals a blow to its borders and the safety of the human side characters within it.

If the GM has already outlined the City's districts, pick one to wild. Otherwise, work out with the GM how far your wilding extends.

The first time you make this move, you are declaring war on the City. Expect its rulers and citizens to retaliate. Every time you make the move thereafter, you win another battle.

Playing the Wolfling

The Wolfling is about acceptance, found family, and assimilation. They are equally curious about and revolted by the human world. The more they learn about civilization, the more alien it seems, but there is something in that strangeness—not least the other adventurers—that calls to them. The adventurers accept the Wolfling for who they are, despite the disgust and discrimination of those in power.

This makes the adventurers a kind of family. The Wolfling is devoted to them and cannot abandon them. They are potentially in conflict with the Wolfling's animal foster family, who can, for understandable reasons, be just as intolerant of humans as the City authorities and the Pantheon are of them.

When the story moves to the Wilds, you are no longer a fish out of water. The move **Heart of the Wilds** gives you a chance to turn your knowledge of wild places to your advantage.

The Wolfling's Doom moves let the Wolfling become more like the animals they admire, but raging, or at the cost of their humanity. They leave assimilation behind and may endanger their friends. **Remake the City** begins a process of conquering the City on behalf of the Wilds, one district at a time. Making that move repeatedly will eventually, depending on how many districts the GM gives the City, let the Wilds overrun the City completely.

CHAPTER

The World Forces

Here are the worksheets for each of the five World Forces in turn. For more information about each World Force, see Build the World on page 62. For advice for the GM, see Playing the World on page 178.

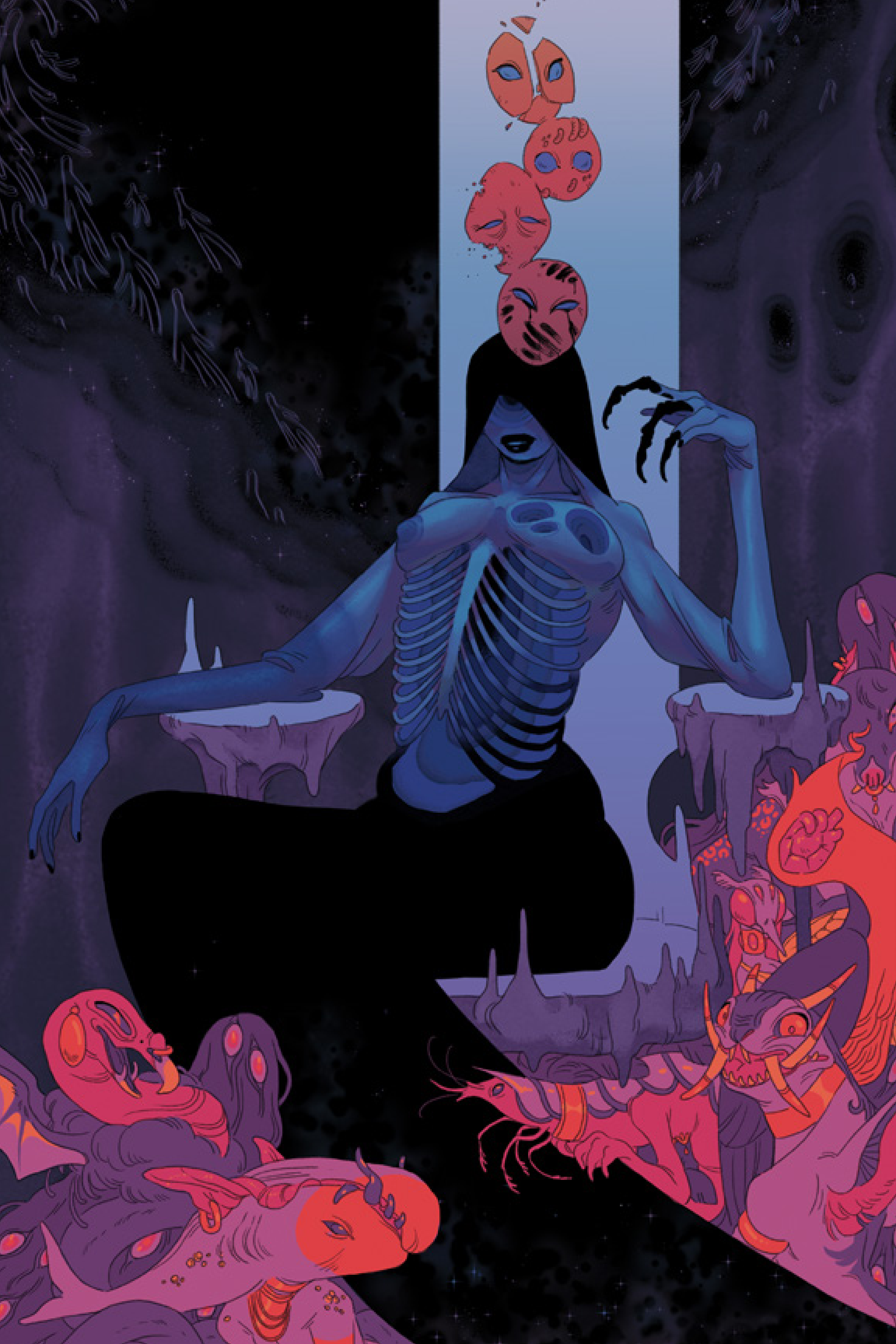
The Pantheon

Each player defines at least one Pantheon member: Pick a name and any four domains from the lists. You may also roll randomly on each list, challenging yourself to narrate a myth that knits together even seemingly unrelated domains.

Names

Adad	Basi	Enlil	Kusarikku	Neti	Ninsun	Shulgi
Anzu	Bau	Eshag	Lamashtu	Nidaba	Nintu	Urash
Aronu	Dusha	Gula	Messana	Ninazu	Nuska	Uttu
Ashur	Emesh	Ishkur	Namtar	Ninshar	Shara	Zisudra

DOMAINS: PAGE 128 ▶



Domains

	Primary Domain	The Natural World	Concepts	Mortal Affairs
1	Abyss	Air, Winds	Abundance	Commerce
2	Beauty	Beasts	Augury	Cooking
3	Death	Birds	Balance	Dyeing
4	Destiny	Blood	Beginnings	Embalming
5	Hallucination	Cats	Betrayal	Farming
6	Harvest	Desert	Boundaries	Fishing
7	Hate	Earth, Stone	Dreams	Gates
8	Invention	Fire	Duality	Households
9	Law	Fish	Endings	Hunters
10	Light, Color	Forests	Fertility	Locks
11	Oblivion	Gold, Gems	Flesh	Lost Children
12	Searing Knowledge	Hyenas, Jackals	Fortune, Luck	Medicine
13	Sex	Insects, Worms	Frenzy	Mirrors
14	Shadows	Moon	Healing	Music
15	Tyranny	Rivers	History	Numerology
16	Underground	Sea	Hunger	Pottery
17	Vengeance	Serpents	Illusion	Shepherds
18	War	Silver	Lies, Trickery	Smithing
19	Wine	Sky, Storms	Oaths, Honesty	Theater
20	Wisdom	Spiders	Pathfinding	Theft
21		Stars	Resurrection	Travelers
22		Sun	Secrets	Weapons
23		Water's Surface	Vertigo	Weaving
24		Wells, Springs	Wholeness	Writing

Your City

What is your City like? Go around the table and answer some or all of the questions below:

1. CITY NAME:

- ☐ Andag
- ☐ Bad-e-ur
- ☐ Badidaia
- ☐ Barag-usum
- ☐ Dabisi
- ☐ Etur
- ☐ Ki-gulsig
- ☐ Kitamul
- ☐ Kizen-mah
- ☐ Kudugu
- ☐ Kugiri
- ☐ Kurzu
- ☐ Lasilim
- ☐ Sudra
- ☐ Udim
- ☐ Urlunizu
- ☐ Ursahulla
- ☐ Uturu
- ☐ an aggressive name
- ☐ a proud name

2. LOCATION:

- ☐ At an oasis
- ☐ Between two rivers
- ☐ In a reed marsh
- ☐ In the grasslands
- ☐ On a cliff
- ☐ On an island
- ☐ On the coast

3. ONE UNIQUE THING ABOUT YOUR CITY AND ITS PEOPLE:

- ☐ Citizens selected by lottery fight to the death in the arena.
- ☐ It borders on a reflection of itself, entered through mirrors or the water's surface.
- ☐ It is built on an Atlantean ruin, mostly hidden underground.
- ☐ It is forever night; sunlight is illegal within the City walls.
- ☐ It is on or near a gate to the Underworld, controlled by one or more temples.
- ☐ It is riddled with sliding walls, hidden doors, and secret passages.
- ☐ It surrounds a shining palace where the gods occasionally appear.
- ☐ Only the wealthy or pious may cause fire to light.
- ☐ Sorcery is legal, but tightly regulated by a temple.
- ☐ The ruling citizens are intelligent, "civilized" animals who detest the Wilds.
- ☐ The wealthy or pious stay young forever, somehow.

4. LANDMARK YOUR CITY IS KNOWN FOR:

- ☐ Giant arena
- ☐ Giant tomb
- ☐ Hanging gardens
- ☐ Library
- ☐ Lighthouse
- ☐ Palatial temple
- ☐ Tower
- ☐ Ziggurat

5. PRODUCTS YOUR CITY IS KNOWN FOR:

- ☐ Agate, carnelian, onyx, amethyst
- ☐ Cedar timber, wood carvings, amber, myrrh
- ☐ Clay, bricks, pottery
- ☐ Copper, iron, tin
- ☐ Dates, palm fronds, soft wood
- ☐ Fish, dye from seashells, coral
- ☐ Grain, flour, lettuce, lentils, linen
- ☐ Granite, small marine fossils, opal
- ☐ Leather, wool, preserved meat, horn, fleece
- ☐ Limestone, marble, sapphire
- ☐ Olive oil, olives, figs
- ☐ Reeds, papyrus, rope, nets
- ☐ Salt, kelp, embalming ash
- ☐ Silver, gold, bone tools

6. RULER(S):

☐ Council of elders
☐ Creature
☐ Democratic assembly
☐ Feuding collection of wealthy families
☐ Monarch
☐ Temple leader

7. THREE PANTHEON MEMBERS WHO HAVE TEMPLES HERE:

(Pick from the Pantheon you created earlier.)

8. PATRON GOD OR CREATURE:

(Pick a creature from this list, or a Pantheon member with a temple here.)

☐ Giant serpent
☐ Great bird
☐ Gryphon
☐ Lamassu
☐ Manticore
☐ Minotaur
☐ Mushussu
☐ Phoenix
☐ Sphinx
☐ An animal who foretells disaster
☐ An animal who foretells prosperity
☐ An animal who died here

9. COINS ARE MADE OF:

☐ Blessed bone
☐ Green gold
☐ Shells
☐ Silver
☐ Obsidian chips
☐ Dreams caught in gems
☐ Secrets written in clay
☐ Yellow gold

10. HOW THE LAWS MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU DON'T BELONG IN YOUR CITY (PICK AT LEAST ONE):

☐ They consider you foreigners and not protected by the City's seal.
☐ They forbid you to be seen in the main square or the wealthy districts.
☐ They forbid you to enter the palace or speak in the assembly.
☐ They forbid you to hold more than a day's wages.
☐ They forbid you to take part in the civic festivals or temple dances.
☐ They forbid you to touch any objects sacred to the City.
☐ They regularly send the City Watch into your neighborhood to harass you.

11. PUBLIC EVENT THAT YOU LOVE:

☐ Athletic competition
☐ Battle commemoration
☐ Divine parade
☐ Flood and harvest festival
☐ Planting festival
☐ Other seasonal festival
☐ Poetry contest
☐ Public dance
☐ Theater contest

12. SACRED OBJECTS IN THE CITY AND YOUR COMMUNITY:

☐ Ancient swords
☐ Clay statuettes of creatures
☐ Gates
☐ Hand mirrors
☐ Inherited necklaces
☐ Knots
☐ Lamps
☐ Wine bowls

13. POPULAR PLACES IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD:

☐ Barter house
☐ Brothel
☐ Coffee house
☐ Healing house
☐ Tavern
☐ Travelers' waystation

14. SECRET COMMUNITIES YOU KNOW ABOUT:

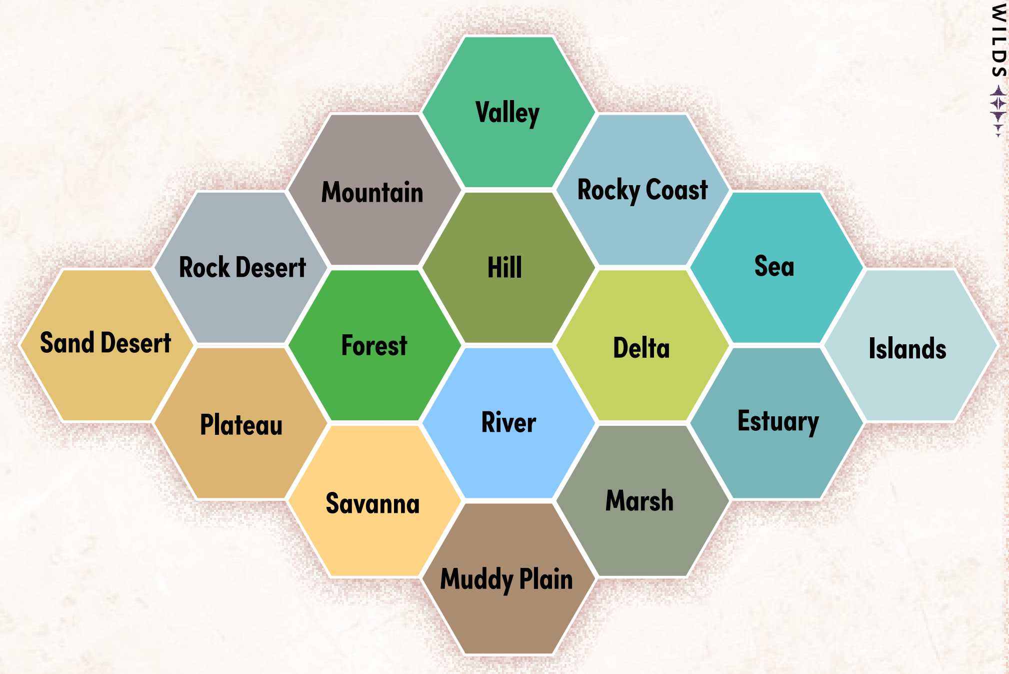
☐ A disgraced cult worshiping a low-status god.
☐ A revolutionary faction.
☐ Beggars; their crossroads and shelters.
☐ Expatriates from other Cities.
☐ People who remember those the City has erased from history.
☐ Seed planters who make the City more wild.
☐ The Atlantis Society, trading in Atlantean artifacts, writing, and culture.
☐ The Smugglers' Guild, moving people, creatures, and objects.
☐ The Thieves' Guild, ruling illegal commerce with an iron fist.

The Wilds

Take turns choosing what kinds of terrain and rumored wonders you wish to encounter. Then see what industries, creatures, and hazards the terrain brings.

Terrain

Take turns marking the hex grid:


Valley
Mountain
Rocky Coast
Rock Desert
Hill
Sea
Sand Desert
Forest
Delta
Islands
Plateau
River
Estuary
Savanna
Marsh
Muddy Plain

1. Circle 1 hex. That is the wilderness terrain closest to the City.

2, 3. Next two players: Underline 1 hex each that is adjacent to the circled hex. Their terrain is a short journey away.

4, 5. Next two players: Put a question mark on 1 hex each. People believe that terrain to be farther off.

Dangers

How do the creatures of the Wilds make life dangerous for the City? Pick up to 2:

☐ They attack travelers coming by road.

☐ They break dams and irrigation canals.

☐ They burrow beneath the City, pulling buildings and people into sinkholes.

☐ They circle the skies, preying on travelers and citizens from the air.

☐ They secretly plant seeds in the City that grow overnight.

☐ They tear down the City walls.

☐ They wreck ships coming in and out of the harbor, or traveling in the river.

Reprisals

How does the City revenge itself on the Wilds? Pick up to 2:

☐ They burn down forests and scrub.

☐ They drain or dam rivers and marshes.

☐ They foul the Wilds' sacred spaces.

☐ They gouge the earth with mines and quarries.

☐ They send hunting parties for prizes.

☐ They set creatures against each other.

☐ They trap juvenile creatures alive.

Terrain Features

Terrain	Industries	Creatures	Hazards
Marsh, Delta	Irrigation, Farming	Alligator, Heron, Hippopotamus, Hyena, Mushussu, Serpent, Sphinx	Floods
River, Muddy plain	Trade, Travel, Mud-brick, Irrigation	Alligator, Hippopotamus, Mushussu	Floods
Island, Sea, Estuary	Fishing, Trade, Travel	Dolphin, Leviathan, Shark, Siren	Drowning, Piracy, Sea-storms
Forest, Savanna, Valley	Logging, Hunting, Farming	Boar, Bull of heaven, Elephant, Gryphon, Hyena, Lamassu, Lion, Ostrich, Rhinoceros, Winged horse	Bandits, Becoming lost, Treefall, Wildfire
Mountain, Hill, Plateau	Mining, Quarries	Anqa, Bull of Heaven, Gryphon, Manticore, Rukh, Winged horse	Rockslide, Snow, Wind
Rock desert, Sand desert	Caravan travel	Ghoul, Falcon, Jackal, Sphinx	Bandits, Dying of thirst

Rumored to Exist in the Wilds

- Atlantean tomb
- Cave of gemstones
- Cave of "wonders"
- Clearing of life & death
- Cliff of all winds
- Cursed graveyard
- Erupting flames
- Healing river
- Lands of fire
- Lost shipwreck
- River of death
- River of forgetfulness
- Sunken temple

The Legacy of Atlantis

Take turns answering one question at a time about the bygone civilization, and the domains of sorcery, with a different player choosing each domain.

The Atlanteans

People say Atlantis was a civilization that (pick up to 2):

- ☐ Achieved an impossible beauty. Sorcery wells up in those moments that pierce your heart.
- ☐ Changed how the world's clockwork runs. Those loose gears you see lying around are tools of sorcery.
- ☐ Commanded powerful, invisible beings. When you hear commands in the air, that's sorcery.
- ☐ Connected to æons past and future. Sorcery is what cracks open the dams between times.
- ☐ Elevated the Pantheon, who turned on their benefactors. Sorcery is a remnant of this exalting power.
- ☐ Knew the World's elements' subtle properties. Sorcery is why substances transmute into one another.
- ☐ Linked all beings alive and dead. Sorcery is how we sometimes feel their pulse.
- ☐ Spun Chaos into a thread and stitched new realities. Sorcery shows us reality's seams and rips.

People say Atlanteans were:

- Beings from elsewhere—some unknown realm.
- Beings from the ocean's depths, who taught the ocean's creatures speech.
- Dead shades who escaped the Underworld.
- Dream walkers, now visible in the lands of dreams.
- Made of gemstones of many colors. Their bones turn up sometimes as cursed jewelry.
- Made of fire. Their scattered, flaming remnants still speak.
- Made of living metal, whose bones today make the sharpest weapons, with minds of their own.
- People, just like us.
- Plant people. Their kin watch and whisper in the reeds and trees all around us.
- Stars descended from the heavens.

People say Atlantis fell because (pick up to 2):

- ☐ The gods blasted their sky-reaching towers with fire, to teach us humility.
- ☐ The gods changed them into unrecognizable creatures, which is why animals who talk are wicked.
- ☐ They ascended to become the stars in the sky, whose fiery gaze misleads the unwary.
- ☐ They didn't. They're around us all the time, in disguise or perhaps just out of the corner of our eyes.
- ☐ They hid themselves too well, and now they cannot make themselves seen. Beware hidden things.
- ☐ They invented a device that turned themselves into light and light into death. Beware devices and strange light sources.
- ☐ They killed each other off in courtly duels, using a warrior's code that some mortals today have adopted (or imagined).
- ☐ They poisoned their own sorcery. Any warped thing you see is this poison leaching into the world.
- ☐ They trapped their entire civilization in interconnected labyrinths of their own design, which beckon us to enter.
- ☐ They wrote themselves out of history. This is why writing is evil.

Sorcery

Sorcery seeps into the world through cracks that the gods have left unguarded. These cracks determine the forms that sorcery takes. Pick one item from each list of immortal domains that is not already taken by a Pantheon member.

Sorcery also (pick 2):

- ☐ Chooses its own timing, sometimes inconvenient.
- ☐ Dreams, distracted, of millennia past.
- ☐ Drinks blood.
- ☐ Leaves its mark on flesh.
- ☐ Likes to lie.
- ☐ Obeys the letter of the law but not the spirit.
- ☐ Seeks to inhabit a body.
- ☐ Sows chaos in the world.

The nearest Atlantean ruin

If you choose, you may also answer questions about the nearest Atlantean ruin, or put them off until they become relevant. The questions are ordered so you can answer one question at a time as you consider finding the ruin, journey closer to it, and eventually enter it.

It's rumored to contain:

- A gate to unknown realms.
- A library of all we have lost.
- A machine that tells the future by mimicking the heavens' motions.
- An array of mirrors showing scenes from possible worlds.
- An inscribed tower with no apparent door or window that people yet enter.
- A means of evading the gods' sight.
- A statue of heartbreaking beauty.
- Endless brass pipes that summon shades from the Underworld.

The last person to enter:

- Brought back a fortune in gems, then was found strangled in their bedchamber.
- Brought back an artifact that remade a district of the City before it was destroyed.
- Cannot string together two coherent words.
- Claimed, when yet alive, to be hunted by a vengeful guardian.
- Claims to have been crowned king.
- Has the gift of prophecy, but is shunned for what they say.
- Never returned.

It's located:

- Behind a curtain of fire.
- Below the City.
- Below the waves.
- Built in the side of a bottomless pit.
- Deep in the forest.
- High on a mountain.
- In an enormous cave.
- Not far, but on only one day a year.
- On a floating island.
- Submerged in mud.
- Walking on metal legs.

It affects its surroundings by:

- Calling out a warning and sense of dread.
- Covering all in the roots of a sorcerous tree.
- Creating new, unlikely life.
- Leaking impossible illusions.
- Spreading patterns of good & bad luck.
- Writing cursive symbols on every surface.

It's made primarily of:

- Basalt.
- Colored glass.
- Orichalcum.
- Obsidian.
- Quartz.
- Sky-iron.
- Strange metals.
- Yellow gold.

It's dominated architecturally by:

- A cracked & polished dome.
- A massive, encircling wall.
- A plaza dotted with buildings.
- A tower unbowed by time.
- Scattered, perfect buildings.

It has life, of a sort:

- A solitary creature who nests there.
- An old god, chained or immured.
- Familiar animals, grotesquely changed.
- Familiar trees and plants, animated.
- Gigantic insects.
- Invisible spirits of lost Atlanteans.
- Moaning moss and lichen.
- Statues that move on their own.
- Strange beasts who claim to be Atlanteans.
- Watchful shadows.
- None. All life is eerily absent.

Death and the Underworld

At some point, you may encounter shades—the immortal remnants of dead mortals—or their realm, or their ruler. Define them here, either at game start or when they come up.

The questions are ordered so you can answer them one at a time, as you hear more about the Underworld, journey closer to it, and eventually venture in.

Its entrance is found:

- At the edge of the world.
- Below the waves.
- In an ancient Atlantean mine.
- In a haunted forest.
- In a nearby cave mouth.
- In a swamp close by.
- In dreams.
- On an island far away.

Its entrance looks like:

- A tomb entrance.
- A farm gate in a low wall.
- A pit, at whose lip you must let go.
- An ornate arch of bone.
- A ford across a cold stream.
- A crack between cyclopean stones.
- A hollow in the bole of a tree.
- A giant funnel web.
- A flame you walk through.

Guarding it is:

- An armor-plated fish.
- An array of gems, your life's story displayed in their gleaming surfaces.
- A blind man with a deadly touch.
- A demon made of basalt.
- Disorienting whispers.
- An enormous spider.
- A ferry pilot.
- A gardener with a golden sickle.
- A large, vicious, but dutiful dog.
- Nothing. Entering is easy; leaving is hard.

The path into it is:

- A featureless mist that saps your memories.
- A long drop through empty space.
- A long, quiet boat ride.
- Jarringly festive.
- A majestic, obsidian hallway.
- Overgrown with sighing moss full of sorrow.
- A ruined statue garden that mocks your life.
- A series of gates; at each one, you must give up something that makes you human.

Once there, you can see (pick up to two):

- Black stones, each of which is a mortal shade.
- Caverns containing odd hills & burning lakes.
- A coral reef of shades & demon mollusks.
- Enormous spider webs with buildings and shades suspended in them.
- The gigantic corpse of a god, whose ribs form the Underworld's roof timbers.
- Groves of delicious fruit trees.
- An iron labyrinth, huge enough to contain buildings, illuminated by a red-hot glow.
- A low cavern, lit by a dim, diffuse light.
- A network of phosphorescent, poisonous streams.
- Nothing, at first. In the dark, things rustle against you.
- The smoky flames of rage.
- A sunless sky over—below?—an inverted mockery of the surface world.

It confirms your fear that:

- The dead are doomed never to change or grow.
- The dead are surrounded by riches they can never use.
- The dead forget you.
- Eternity is ugly and dreary.
- Injustice is never punished.
- Kindness is an illusion reserved for the living.
- Only the worst parts of people persist.
- Souls are food for demons.
- There is no love in the Underworld.
- You will never learn the truth.

The dead look like:

- Animated shadows, barely substantial.
- Hard buds of coral encrusting the Underworld's walls and floor.
- Flames of various colors, flickering as they speak.
- Desiccated, skeletal human beings, hungry.
- Stone statues, with broken limbs and eroded faces, moving haltingly.
- Struggling figures cocooned in webs.
- Fruit: glossy, dripping, overripe or ruined.

The dead can:

- Follow you out of the Underworld, if you let them.
- Foretell the fates of the living.
- Live again by feeding on your warmth.
- See all the living who still love them.
- Send messages to worlds known and unknown.
- Tell you the secrets of past ages.
- Visit the sunlit lands as birds.

The Underworld's demons are:

- Barely visible shadows from a lower abyss.
- Fearsome, chained beasts of teeth and claws.
- Floating globules of grease.
- Made of iron and flame.
- Made of bone, with hard, snapping jaws.
- Sinewy goblins covered in matted fur.
- Something like fish, plying the water or air with fins.
- Spindly, fussy insects, forever making marks on the shades and walls.

The Underworld keeps shades from leaving by:

- Assigning each one a personal demon (but there aren't enough demons).
- Guarding the thousand tunnels that lead to the surface (but they miss some).
- Imprisoning them in cages (but one of them broke the lock).
- Patrolling a wall around the Underworld (that shades still sneak through).

Here, the ruler appears to you as:

- A figure of animate stone, gems glinting in its hide.
- A large, reclining black cat.
- An invisible presence, the principle of mortality.
- A large, human figure with a hyena's head.
- A sculpture of a human head, with veiled eyes.
- A serpent made of flame.
- A tall, skeletal being wearing a gold mask.
- The Leviathan.

The ruler is:

- Busily walking from place to place, followed by a retinue of demons.
- Counting, absent-mindedly.
- Dead, the better to rule over the dead.
- Dreaming, not to be woken.
- Gigantic, the landscape over which all move.
- Perched high above, watching all.
- Present in the eyes of every shade and demon you see.
- Running military drills of unknown purpose.
- Unavailable, locked behind bronze doors.

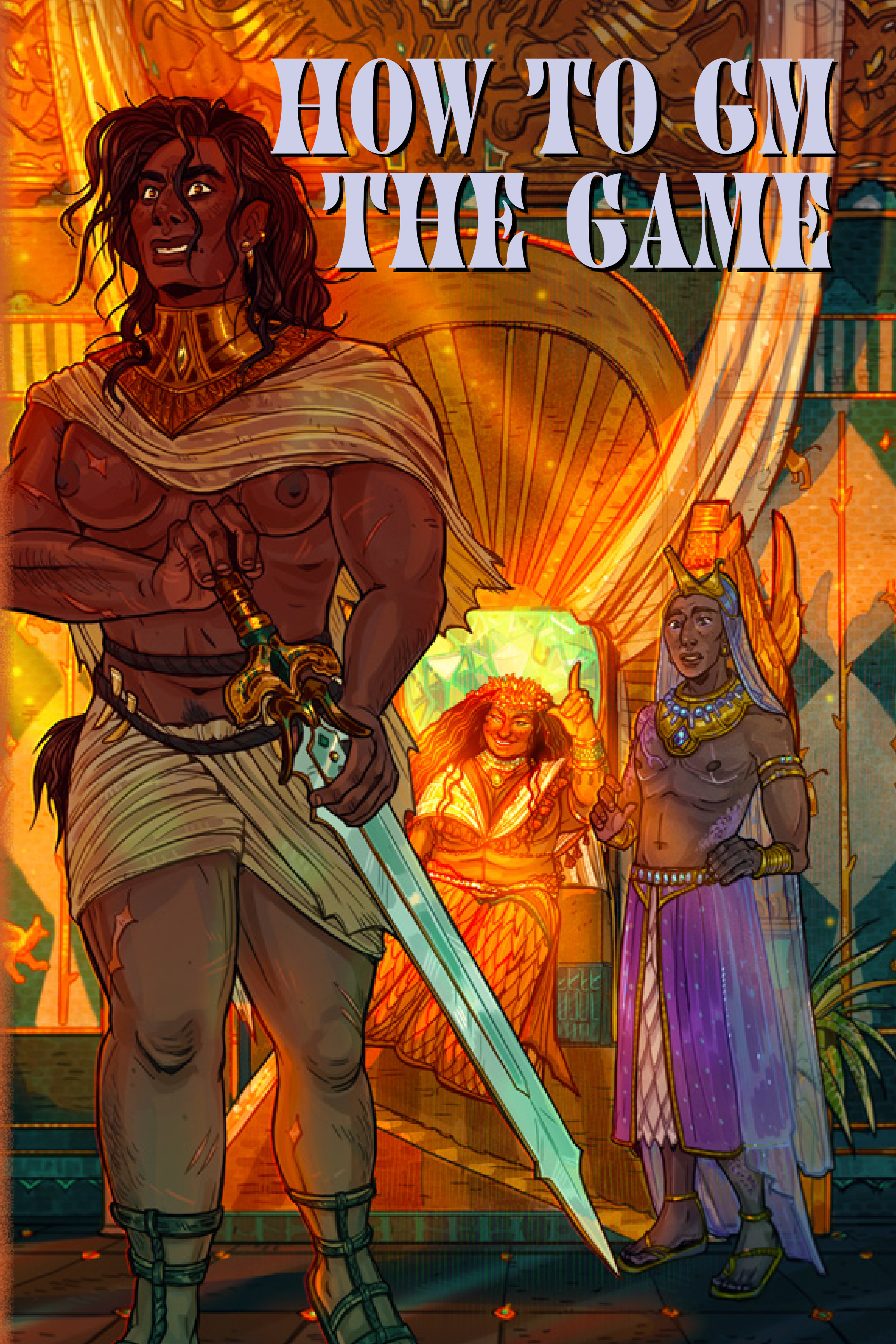
As the GM, you take the building blocks that the players provide you, assemble them to your liking, and bring the resulting world to life. Give the players the chance to get into difficult, heartfelt relationships. Tempt them to achieve great things, and make it cost.

Half of this game is messy feelings. The other half is propulsive action. Make the World Forces intrude on the adventurers' lives, create problems, and demand attention. Compel the adventurers to choose between their relationships with each other and their selfish, beckoning power.

Let the following GM principles guide you in running the game. Fall back on them when you're not sure which of your ideas best fits the players' expectations.

After that, there's a list of several GM moves. These are specific ways you can mess with the adventurers while exciting the players.

HOW TO GM THE GAME



CHAPTER

GM Principles

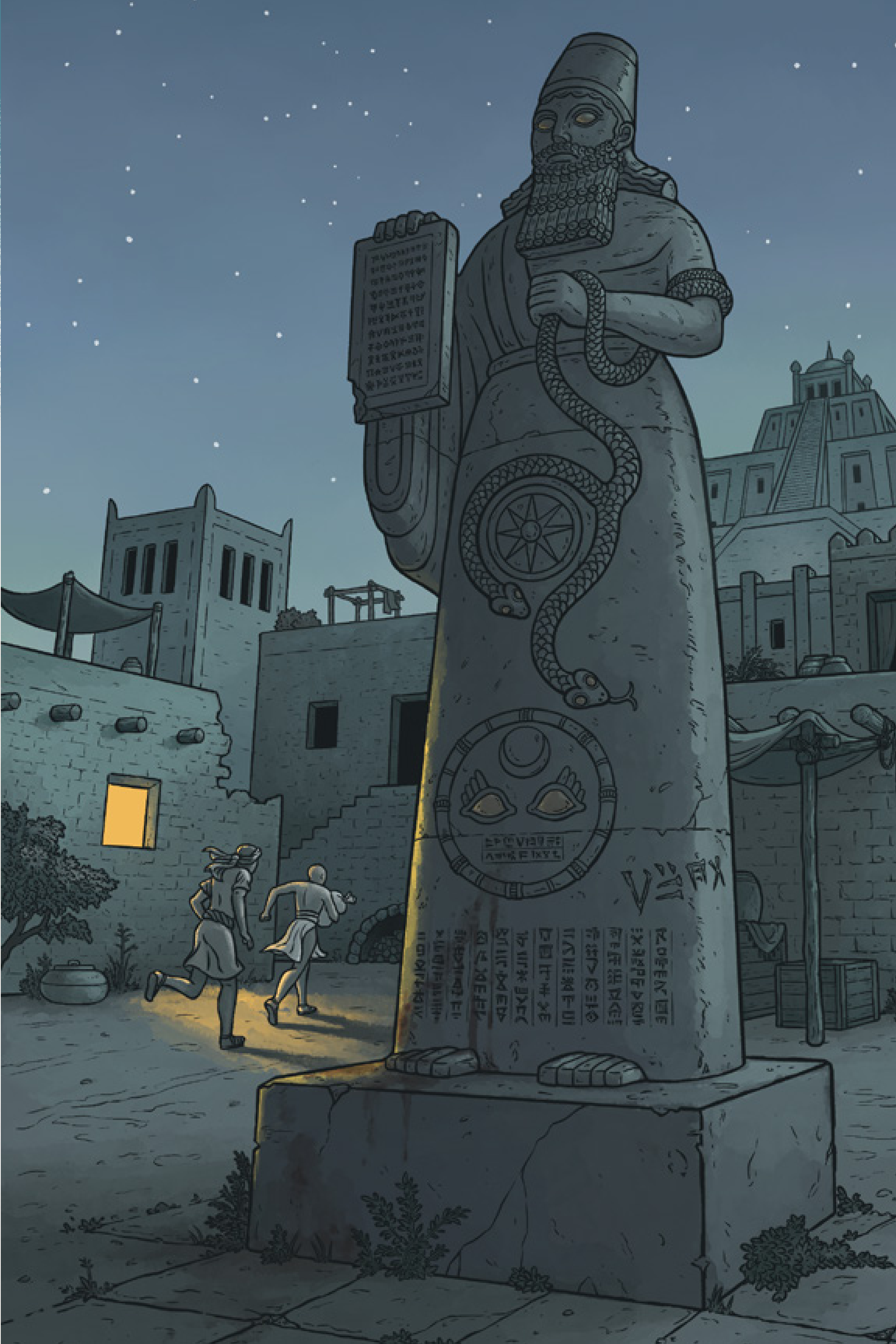
- Put the World Forces in the adventurers' way.
- Make the world physical but unknown.
- Be a fan of the players.
- Ground everything in sincere, urgent emotions.
- Keep side characters simple and relatable.
- Let things get big.
- Play to find out what happens.

Put the World Forces in the adventurers' way.

Right from the start, put the World Forces—especially the Pantheon and the City—in the way of what the adventurers want. When the players create their adventurers, take note of how they answer their World Force questions. These outline what they're fighting against, at least at first. Later, you can ladle on more tension, pinning the adventurers with intersecting, conflicting demands.

The adventurers are seeking love and fortune, and the Pantheon and the City are here to stop them.

The City grinds along tirelessly every day. As it does, it just happens to grind down the adventurers' homes, livelihoods, hearts, and lives. It's not personal. It's never personal. Not until the adventurers force it to be.



By contrast, the Pantheon hates the adventurers actively—for who they are. The Pantheon's members may not start out knowing the adventurers by name, but they hate the categories that the adventurers fall into: renegades, rebels, dabblers in sorcery, followers of a hated god, or people caught in between and belonging, so the Pantheon thinks, nowhere. As the adventurers gain in reputation, it becomes about them as individuals. While the Pantheon's members may fight among each other, they agree on one thing: The adventurers must be humbled, conquered, and ultimately destroyed.

The Pantheon and City rulers work in tandem. The gods set the order of creation, defining winners and losers. When the players build the Pantheon, they will imply the values that characterize winners. When they build the City, they will give you some suggestion of who's in power there: the City's rulers, its influential politicians, the official temples' cult leaders, heroic generals, and the wealthy. Make sure they're all aligned with the Pantheon's values.

More explicitly than anything else, the World Force-related questions—where the players specify what makes the adventurers losers—tells you what kind of society you have, and what cosmic order that society sits in.

It will also point toward who the adventurers' potential allies are: foreigners, the poor, convicted criminals, worshipers of low-status cults, and others whose rights the City doesn't recognize or whose nature the gods hate.

Death, the Wilds, and the Legacy of Atlantis also oppose the adventurers in specific contexts.

Death is the Pantheon's ultimate sanction, but it's also opposed to life in general. It mocks the idea of love every time it takes an adventurer's loved one.

The Wilds seek to destroy the City, and the Legacy of Atlantis seeks to live again. They are hazards the adventurers encounter in the course of their larger fight.

Opposition to the adventurers may take the form of:

- An official temple cult that hates them or expects things of them
- A landlord they owe
- A noble who demands their service
- Unjust laws and their unequal enforcement
- A crime boss they owe
- The City Watch looking for them
- A cult sacrificing their neighbors to glorify its god
- Random crime, thanks to citizens jammed into a tight space and in need
- An animal prince against whom they've transgressed
- A creature hunting for them, or whose territory they've invaded
- A wilderness of scarcity, by necessity full of hunters and prey
- Death's claim over anyone, at will
- The dead who miss their loved ones
- Atlantis's tenacious schemes to revive itself

Among these threats, offer glimmers of community and resilience: people in the neighborhood engaged in mutual aid; fellow criminals; animals who scorn the City's laws; the dead who offer a chance to escape Death, for now; letters from dead Atlanteans whose words hit home.

This game makes explicit what our world often implies: The ultimate authority of all creation is actively opposed to your existence. Unlike our world, the game gives the players tools to overcome that opposition. Make sure to let them.

Make the world physical but unknown.

More than other kinds of fantasy, sword & sorcery promises an embodied feeling: dripping sweat, heaving muscles, splashing wine, roasted meat, jingling coins, warped flesh, spilled blood, hewing, running, and embracing. Whatever is going on, highlight its physical aspects—within the bounds of the group's Palette Grid.

The gods, too, are physical. They are located in this world: on mountaintops, underground, or in far-off lands. Intrepid adventurers may find their fortresses and step foot in their palaces.

See Chapters 11 and 13 for ideas about different settings. To give your side characters specificity, name them—see the list of names, page 278. Make a world that people can see, feel, hear, smell, and taste.

You don't have to know everything about the world.

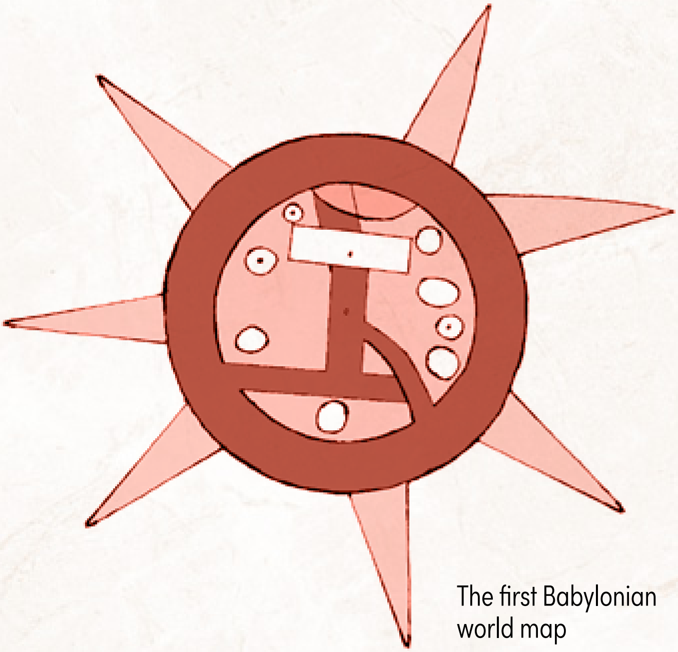
Don't worry about knowing the world's geography or history. Sword & sorcery's sense of possibility relies on not knowing what's out there.

What year is it? Who knows! Each City names the years differently, after their rulers' names and achievements—certainly not by *counting* them.

Which way is north? Who knows! What even is a north? Have you *seen* the first Babylonian world map?

In this game, creating a cohesive world relies more on mapping out the structures of power than mapping out longitude and latitude.

Keep soliciting players' ideas for the world as you go: With their help, you may invent more gods to stand in their way, more restrictions and refuges in the City, and new lands of undreamed romantic possibility.



The first Babylonian world map

Be a fan of the players.

Look for opportunities to shine the spotlight on each of the adventurers so they can be awesome. Encourage them to be bold; the dice will complicate their lives for them. Even when you make a move against them, it should feel like a reversal of fortune that the players can enjoy playing out. Eventually, disastrously, their adventurers will ascend to monstrous power. Cheer for them along the way.

This game gives players lots of opportunities to take narrative control. Listen to what they add to the fiction and run with it.

Remember to spotlight each adventurer equally. When one of them is in the middle of a big challenge, leave them on a cliffhanger and swing the spotlight over to another player.

Honor the Rule of Cool

Part of being a fan of the players is the Rule of Cool: If you or one of the players wants to do something that makes the game dramatic and exciting, but the rules don't provide a way to do it, do it anyway. These rules can't imagine the story you and your friends will tell. The rules mean well, and they try to point your story in a meaningful direction. But the story belongs to you and your friends. When the rules fail you or threaten to get in the way, thank them politely, ignore them, and carry on with your story.

Ground everything in sincere, urgent emotions.

It's time to tell you this game's secret: The interpersonal drama drives the adventure, not the other way around. The adventure and the settings are props and metaphors for the relationships between the adventurers and their emotional arcs.

To keep the game feeling meaningful, and not just a schlocky chase after MacGuffins, focus on adventurers' relationships, then endanger them. Have the Pantheon deny them their hearts' desires, make the City grind down their ambitions, and let Death steal their loved ones. Then let the adventurers fight back against all of it.

When you want to frame a new scene, put people in it, and connect them to the adventurers. Intimate, complicated relationships are where this game shines. Threatening those relationships is how you make conflicts matter.

Keep side characters simple and relatable.

Some side characters are nameless, like footsoldiers or animated skeletons. They usually attack in bulk, but they still may have personality, especially if a player decides to **Entice** one.

For more significant side characters, give each one a name (see the list of names on page 278), and at least 1 Epithet. Give them 1 Wound for every Epithet they have.

Unlike with adventurers, side characters' Epithets don't have worth. They simply describe how notable, formidable, or complicated the side character is.

Give each named side character an obvious motivation. They may seek to:

- Acquire something they want or need—from food or security to more ambitious goals.
- Prevent the adventurers from acquiring that thing first.
- Get themselves or their dependents to safety.
- Prevent the adventurers from threatening them or their dependents.
- Pursue a relationship.
- Tempt an adventurer to aid their goals.

Clearly describe what they're saying or doing. The side character might act cryptic and subtle to the adventurers, but the *players* should know exactly what the side character wants.

It helps to link side characters to one or more of the World Forces—however indirectly—to give them context and someone to whom to escalate the conflict.

Have empathy for creatures of all kinds. The motivations above apply to "simple" animals just as much as people and self-evidently sentient creatures. Unlike a sphinx, a lion may not have speech, but both have intelligence, and both will seek one or more of the goals above.

Let things get big.

The game's scope is enormous. By **Beseeching a Force**, all adventurers have access to world-breaking power. However, it should cost them in personal ways. The more impossible-seeming an adventurer's goal is, the deeper it should cut them.

In line with the game's epic scope, make the story daunting: despots with absolute power, temples with an iron grip on people's consciences, towering creatures who trample mortals without notice, and gods. Then encourage the players to rise to meet them.

Play to find out what happens.

Don't work out a plot before the first game. The story will come from everyone at the table—from adventurer creation, world-building, and the first World Scene.

When you springboard off the players' ideas, they feel more invested and you look clever. In ***Defy the Gods***, the story belongs to everyone at the table equally.

Always center the players and their adventurers. Whenever you throw something at them, finish describing a big scene, or find yourself unsure what to say, ask, **"What do you do?"** This gives the spotlight back to them. It also lets them say, explicitly or subtly, how they feel about your latest idea. The more often you stop talking and check in with "What do you do?", the more on-target you'll get.

Let the players surprise you, then react to what they do. The story will go places you never could have imagined.

CHAPTER

GM Moves

As the GM, you don't roll dice. Most of the time, like the players, you are free to narrate whatever you want into the fiction. However, sometimes, the players will ask you to complicate their lives. For instance:

- The conversation pauses, and everyone looks to you to see what happens next.
- A player rolls a miss (7-), and you get to give their adventurer consequences. A miss never means nothing happens.
- A player rolls a burning success (11+), and you get to give them more than they bargained for. A burning success is never *just* a good thing.
- They inflict a Wound on a powerful side character, who reacts immediately.

In these situations, make the move that seems to fit best. Below is a list of options:

Narrative Moves

All moves push the story forward, but these focus on introducing story beats:

- Introduce a portent of future woe.
- Introduce faint ripples from distant waves of trouble crashing elsewhere.
- Introduce a side character connected to a World Force and at least two adventurers.
- Have a side character try to intensify a relationship with an adventurer.
- Make the World Forces endanger someone the adventurers care about.
- Make a World Force drive a wedge between the adventurers. Offer a precious advantage at the expense of their relationship with another.
- Offer a promise of a treasure or a sorcerous tool. It may help them survive better in society or overturn it. Surround the thing with dangers.
- Stage a quiet scene that highlights the story's emotional stakes. Invite the adventurers to open up to each other.

Enemy Reaction Moves

When an enemy takes a Wound, they immediately make a reaction move in response. This is over and above any Wounds they inflict on an adventurer as part of the player's move.

These moves are important. They transform a 3-Epithet enemy from a momentary annoyance to the focus of the scene.

Reaction moves include the following:

- Hurt an innocent.
- Take a hostage.
- Break something that makes the surroundings more dangerous.
- Reveal a new defense or advantage.
- Force the adventurers to choose between letting you retreat and allowing a disaster to happen.
- Implicate the adventurers in wrongdoing.
- Attempt to eliminate witnesses.
- Propose a deal.
- Summon reinforcements.
- Increase the scale of the violence.

Significant enemies may demand their own custom reaction moves. Look at what they want and what their Epithets are.

A defeated enemy does not make a reaction move.

ON A MISS (7 OR LESS)	ON A BURNING SUCCESS (11+)
When a player rolls a miss, make things worse:	When a player rolls a burning success, and the move asks the GM to say what else happens, let things get out of hand:
In a fight:	
◆ Inflict Wounds on them. ◆ Inflict Wounds on a side character they care about. ◆ Raise the stakes of the fight. ◆ Bring in more enemies. ◆ Break something important. ◆ Cut off their path of retreat. ◆ Cut off one of the adventurers from the others.	◆ Inflict excessive Wounds on their enemy. ◆ Inflict spillover Wounds on friends and those they desire. ◆ Give them one thing, but break something else important. ◆ Raise the stakes of the danger, but offer a path of retreat. ◆ Defeat the current enemy, but reveal a worse one.
In a tense romantic situation:	
◆ Raise the stakes of their temptation. ◆ Offer what they desire at a price too high to pay. ◆ Endanger the object of their desire. ◆ Tempt one of the adventurers while cut off from the others. ◆ Put a new enemy in the way of the object of their desire.	◆ Let them reach the object of their desire, but with more intense feelings than they expected. ◆ Let them reach the object of their desire, but make a new enemy as a result.
In a dangerous place:	
◆ Signal that an alarm has been raised. ◆ Bring down the World Forces of that place harder. ◆ Reveal a new danger previously undetected. ◆ Break something important. ◆ Cut off their path of retreat. ◆ Make their goal harder to reach. ◆ Bring immediate danger crashing in.	◆ Let them reach their immediate goal, but signal that an alarm has been raised. ◆ Let them reach interim safety, but increase the surrounding danger.

Playbook-Specific GM Moves

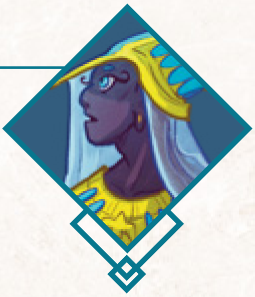
When a player picks a playbook, they're inviting you to explore its themes.

The Sword

- When they are violent, make it lead to problems.
- When they break something, make it so they cannot mend it.
- When they are proud, offer a tempting deal from an authority figure in exchange for submission.
- Endanger their loved ones in a way violence cannot solve.

The troubling consequences of the Sword's violence should be both immediate and far-reaching. Ensnare their friends and lovers in these consequences.

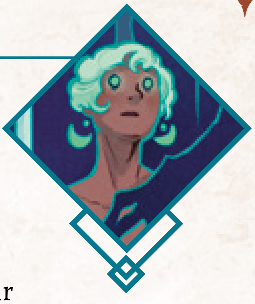
The Sorcerer



- When they use sorcery, highlight how transgressive it is.
- When they use knowledge or artifacts from Atlantis, make its Legacy feel present, relevant, and worth grieving.
- When they retreat to their scrolls, appeal to them with simple, human connection.
- When they attempt to make a simple, human connection, highlight how big the gap is.

The Sorcerer deals with metamorphosis, alienation from people around them, and the hidden, ancient nature of the world. Give them a personal connection to the Atlantean civilization. Let the Sorcerer's player define aspects of Atlantis, then look for ways to make those things beautiful but problematic.

The Vessel



- When they interact with their patron, highlight the intimate trust between them.
- When they interact with humans, highlight the relative lack of trust compared to their patron.
- When they face a problem that demands human connection, tempt them with the availability of their patron's power.
- When they neglect their patron, make their patron need them.
- When they interact with side characters, make their lives seem strange to the Vessel.

The Vessel is submissive in a world that requires defiance. Help them investigate the difference between trusting and mistrustful relationships. Give life to their patron, and ask the Vessel to describe them and a typical interaction. Make the patron demand much from the Vessel, then reward the Vessel when they behave. Treat the player and the adventurer both with respect, always check for consent from both of them, and never think the player is submissive because the adventurer is.

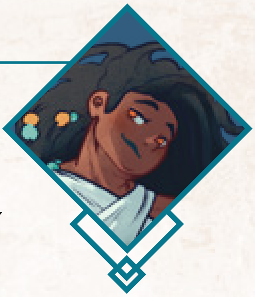
Playing the Patron

The Vessel's player probably has ideas about the patron; run with them.

The patron is an outcast, ostracized from the Pantheon. Nevertheless, they're still immortal, and their perspective is ethereal. They live in immortal realms, either among the stars and mountaintops or deep below the earth. They're not concerned about death or fragile, human relationships. They luxuriate in their domains like velvet cushions. Give them a plan for the Vessel that the Vessel may not share.

When the Vessel makes the move **View from on High**, imagine how gloriously the patron sees the world. The burning success asks you to give the player stabbing visions from time to time. Whether those visions include content—portents of possible futures, terrifying faces of creatures and demons—or just a kaleidoscope of the patron's domains, use the visions to give the Vessel both advantages and trouble. Use them to explain their misses and burning successes.

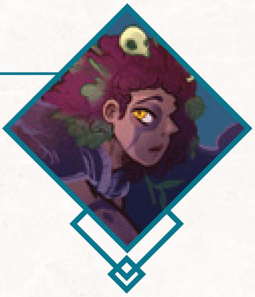
The Sailor



- When they want something, introduce a non-violent obstacle in their way.
- When they try to be clever or charming but roll a miss (7-) or a burning success (11+), show how they overcomplicate things.
- When they are pressed to stand with their friends, tempt them with escape routes.
- When they want to be freely intimate with someone, demand honesty and commitment.

The Sailor wants to show how clever they are, run from their problems, and play the field. Give them obstacles that they can solve non-violently. Allow their smarts and charm to solve some problems, but cause others.

The Wolfling



- When they are in civilization, entangle them in human relationships.
- When they are in the Wilds, surround them with danger and high stakes, from other animal clans but also from their own family.
- When they are between places, have humans ask them to forsake the Wilds.

The Wolfling is trapped between two worlds, never truly belonging to either one. They are curious about civilization but suspicious of it. Press the player to say what draws the Wolfling to humans, then endanger that. Tie up the Wolfling in meaningful human relationships. Make it difficult for the Wolfling to leave humans behind, even if they don't feel they belong with them.

The Revenant

- When they fall back on their old life, show how the gallu (their demons, see below) come closer.
- When they try to do or be something new, introduce people or shades who knew them before.
- When they try to be sincere, tempt them to dissemble.
- Offer them an opportunity to be someone wholly new, then endanger that.

The Revenant wants to embrace their new life, deny others' expectations of them, and flee from divine persecution. They're not who they used to be. Amid charming "first" experiences of human life, introduce people or shades who demand them to still be their old self.

Portraying the Gallu Demons

As described in the Revenant playbook, the gallu demons are beings pursuing the Revenant, seeking to drag them back to the Underworld. Describe them vividly, making the chase into something with emotional stakes for the Revenant's other relationships. See one version of the gallu on page 268 in Chapter 13, Creatures and Enemies.

If the gallu demons catch up to the Revenant outside of the Revenant's Crisis, treat it as a climactic battle. Require the Revenant's friends to come to their defense. Make sure they can, together, fend off the demons. Even if the demons prevail, they need not succeed in retrieving the Revenant.

However, you may decide, in a terrible downbeat, that they *do* succeed. This is not the end of the Revenant's arc. Imprison them in the Underworld, but still full of life. Let them reconnect with estranged friends among the shades while highlighting how much they have changed. Make their incandescent aliveness a problem for the Underworld to try to solve—a substance to drain away, or to prevent from burning everything else. Let the Revenant plot a plausible escape, and let their living friends plot a jail break. If the Revenant is some way along their Doom arc, they may even challenge Death for dominion over the Underworld and all its shades.

CHAPTER

Running Side Characters and Combat

The players drive the story, but they will look to you for a plot: a backdrop against which their playbooks' themes can shine, and a McGuffin they can go after while exploring their relationships and their playbooks' Doom arcs.

Build on Session Zero

Four parts of Session Zero are especially useful for plot:

- The adventurers' relationships with each other.
- The adventurers' relationships—and friction—with the World Forces.
- Details of the World Forces, including the Pantheon's members, the City's features, and the domains of sorcery.
- The players' first World Scene.

Make notes of what the players say. You don't need to incorporate it all into the plot right away, but the more you center the players' offerings, the cleverer you'll look, and the more excited they'll be.

Building Side Characters

Significant Side Characters Have Epithets

Signpost the significance of a side character in the story by how many Epithets you give them.

Side characters' Epithets don't have any worth. Each Epithet describes some way the side character acts in the world or is known to act. The more significant a side character is to the story, the more Epithets they have:

0 Epithets: For anonymous enemies, like animated skeletons and soldiers, often attacking in groups.

1–2 Epithets: For a side character who shows up once in the story, or who blocks a minor goal. You may give them a name, or identify them only by their job or function.

3–4 Epithets: For a named side character who recurs in the story or offers significant opposition. Give them a relationship with at least one of the adventurers, preferably two.

4–5 Epithets: For a formidable, named side character who opposes the adventurers' main goal in the story. Give them a relationship with two, three, or more adventurers.

Unlike with adventurers, it's best to make side characters' Epithets basically positive. They reflect the side character's abilities: they're the legs of the stool that the adventurers will knock out from under them.

All Pantheon members have five Epithets. Four of them are for each of their four domains: ”who rules (insert domain here).” The fifth, final one is “who belongs in the Pantheon.” Each time the adventurers deal a Pantheon member a Wound, they remove the member's authority over one domain—one part of the world. Wounding the final Epithet exiles the immortal from the Pantheon and may even strip them of their immortality. It is the kind of total defeat that many sessions of an epic adventure may lead to.

Side Characters Have Hearts

Give all side characters something they want—something obvious and direct. Also, make each human or human-like side character able, under the right circumstances, to be wooed. At any moment, a player may decide to get what they want by **Enticing** and/or **Influencing** the side character. Suddenly, your anonymous guard has emotions, and a visceral attraction that may surprise *them*, let alone you. Be ready for it.

Running Combat

Combat in ***Defy the Gods*** is player-facing: The results of the players' combat moves determine the Wounds inflicted on both adventurers and enemies alike.

Wounding the Adventurers: a Sense of Scale

When a player makes a fighting move, it usually says that they "take Wounds as directed." Most enemies inflict **1 Wound** in this situation by default. Even significant mortal enemies typically inflict 1 Wound at a time.

However, as the players rise in monstrous power and gain more intense relationships, they can take on bigger and bigger World Forces, from the City's rulers to the gods themselves. Signpost the danger these Forces pose with the number of Wounds they can inflict as the result of a single fighting move.

Large creatures and minor gods, who have 3–4 Epithets, may inflict **2 Wounds** as the result of a single fighting move. This makes them very dangerous.

All those who have 4–5 Epithets—Pantheon members, beast princes, revived Atlantean mages, and Death—may inflict **3 Wounds** as the result of a single fighting move. This should deter adventurers from taking them on until late in the game's arc.

The player sometimes has an option to take less harm—that is, 1 fewer Wounds. Subtract that from these numbers.

An enemy's Epithets and the number of Wounds they inflict provide a sense of scale to the players, emphasizing how significant the enemy is to the game's overall arc.

Make sure to signpost these numbers clearly before a player makes a fighting move against them. If you forget until you're narrating the consequences, and the player is surprised, be flexible enough to rewind the story and let them choose a different move.

The following is a rough guide to the levels of opposition the adventurers face, and which kinds of opposition roll up to which others. Feel free to improvise within this framework.

0–2 Epithets, inflict 1 Wound:	Heralds, minions, lieutenants	Hazards of the wilds, other creatures	Minor Atlantean artifacts
3–4 Epithets, inflict 1–2 Wounds:	City rulers, temple leaders, demigods	Giant creatures	Atlantean ruins, automata, awakened artifacts
4 Epithets, inflict 2–3 Wounds:	Minor gods	Beast princes	Atlantean mages and scientists
5 Epithets, inflict 3 Wounds:	Pantheon members, Death		

The main source of conflict is with the rulers of the City and the Pantheon gods. The City authorities, the temples, and the Pantheon reinforce each other. The City has the Pantheon's approval (at least to start), and the Pantheon benefits from the City's worship.

The Wilds and the Legacy of Atlantis are on separate tracks: While they may be dangerous and unpredictable, ultimately, return the story's focus to the adventurers' oppression by the Pantheon and their mortal allies.

In combat, enemies may do more than inflict Wounds; they affect their surroundings in natural and supernatural ways. The Pantheon members may summon, change, or destroy anything within their domains, or lend such power to their mortal allies. Giant beasts trample the ground, and Atlantean sorcery changes all it touches into beautiful, unsustainable forms. Get creative with it.

Wounding Side Characters and Changing the Story

Every Wound that a side character takes crosses off one of their Epithets. An Epithet can be Wounded because of physical harm, or because the adventurers do something to invalidate what that Epithet represents.

When any enemy takes a Wound, assuming they are not defeated, they immediately make a reaction move (see page 162).

When all their Epithets are crossed off, a side character is defeated: killed, unconscious, or helpless, as makes sense in the story.

If a side character is 1 Wound away from being defeated, and they are still significant to the story, allow them to escape. The reaction move **Force them to choose between letting you retreat and allowing a disaster to happen** gives the adventurers a chance to stop them at great cost.

Healing Side Characters

When the adventurers Wound a significant side character in a merely physical way, or invalidate an Epithet of theirs only temporarily, and the side character survives, you may heal the Epithet (unmark the Wound) before the adventurers meet them again.

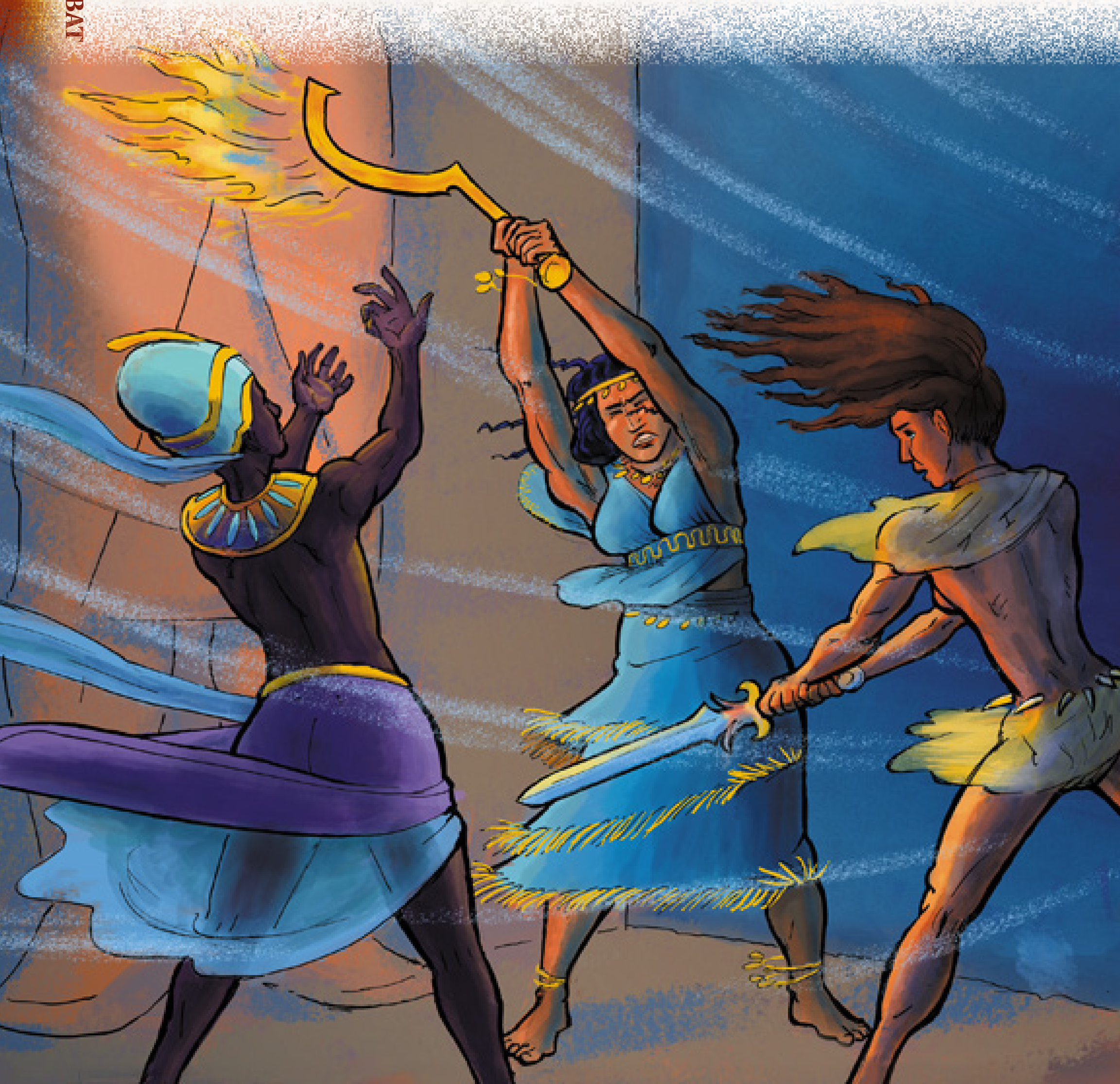
However, if the Wound reflects an enduring change in the Epithet's truth, leave it Wounded as long as those story conditions hold. This allows the players to chip away at an archenemy and improve their chances in the final confrontation.

Example of Combat

Here's an extended example of combat with a significant enemy:

Ashme the Sword, Melem the Sailor, and Tahara the Sorcerer are standing in the public area of the temple of Anur. They are here to confront Kushana, the ruling lady of House Orima, which is allied with Anur.

Kushana is a major villain. She has relationships with all the adventurers: She is Ashme's ex-lover, she impounded Melem's ship, and she incited a mob to burn down Tahara's illegal library of scrolls.



She started with five Epithets, but one is Wounded:

- Who commands House Orima with an iron fist
- ~~Whose wealth buys loyalty but not love~~ (Wounded)
- Who collects others' secrets to use against them
- Who is the sword of Anur, god of fire and commerce
- Who wages a bitter rivalry against House Iraum

In the last session, the adventurers crippled Kushana's wealth by breaking into House Orima's vault, where they **INFLUENCED** a giant snake to eat all the jars of silver coins. This resulted in Kushana's Epithet about wealth being Wounded.

Jean (the GM): "You find yourselves in the middle of a major public event. The high priestess of Anur is conducting a civic ritual to bless the City with prosperity. Hundreds of people are there, from honored nobles to hopeful paupers. The priestess stands behind a stone altar, with a 20-foot statue of Anur behind her. Fragrant, smoking braziers surround her as she intones the verses of the ritual. And Kushana is standing just to one side of the altar, near the high priestess—a place of great prestige. What do you do?"

Malika (playing Melem): "We timed this perfectly. I shout out 'Kushana!' in the middle of everything."

Jean (GM): "The ritual screeches to a halt. Silence. Powerful people glare at you, including the high priestess, her acolytes, and all the nobles. Kushana looks ashen at the sight of you three. But the rest of the crowd is just surprised and curious."

Anna (playing Ashme): "Can I just use **END THE CONVERSATION** on Kushana from here?"

Jean (GM): "No, she's not within arm's reach." (To herself: *I won't make that mistake again.*)

Alex (Ashme): "Okay. I wade through the crowd toward her, with my Atlantean sword drawn. I'm going to **CLASH**."

Jean (GM): "Kushana throws off her robes and draws a finely detailed, sickle-bladed sword, glinting with gold. What Epithet are you invoking?"

Alex (Ashme): "This seems like a good time for 'who never backs down from a challenge.' It's +2." [Alex rolls] "...Aaand that's a 9."

Jean (GM): "A glowing success! Your swords clang together as acolytes and worshipers scatter. What option are you picking?"

Anna (Ashme): "I'm choosing 'create an opening.' I whirl my sword around my head, keeping others away. Kushana takes a Wound—I'll Wound her Epithet 'Who is the sword of Anur.' And I take a Wound to my Epithet, 'who leaps first.'"

Jean (GM): "Sounds good." Jean crosses off Kushana's Epithet. "I'll say your blade cuts her necklace, and her ceremonial amulet of Anur falls to the ground. But now, Kushana gets to make a reaction move. She **'reveals a new defense or advantage.'** She holds her sword over a brazier, and it lights with magical fire."

Tomás (playing Tahara): "Of course it does. I'm casting a spell."

Malika (Melem): "'Everybody duck!'"

Tomás (Tahara): "Ha ha. I invoke 'who wastes no time on fools.' That's +2, so I roll four dice total. I get 2, 3, 5, and 6. A burning success! It also lets me use the Elements spell. I summon blasts of magical air to blow out her magical fire."

Jean (GM): "That works. Kushana looks shocked and a bit deflated. But you rolled a burning success, which means the winds slip from your control. A storm starts blowing through the temple, keeping Kushana's palace guards away. Even the pillars start to shake a little."

Tomás (Tahara): "Hm, if I mark Fire to assert control over the winds, can I still use them to keep the guards away?"

Jean (GM): "Sure."

Tomás (Tahara): "Okay. That puts me at 3 Fire."

Jean (GM): "Melem, what do you do?"

Malika (Melem): "I'm using my fighting move, **DAZZLING BLADE**. In the middle of this windstorm, I dance up to Kushana, sword flashing. I'm invoking 'who dips their words in honey.' That's a +1."

Jean (GM): "What are you saying to her that's dipped in honey?"

Malika (Melem): "'Oh, Kushana, it's a shame you lost your fire. Has Anur abandoned you?' I roll an 11 total. A burning success. I inflict 2 Wounds. I'll pick 'Parry,' to avoid taking a Wound in return."

Jean (GM): "Your blade slashes her, and she's bleeding badly. I'm crossing off her Epithets about her ruling House Orima and her rivalry with House Iraum, but those won't be permanent unless something worse happens to make her lose standing in the City. She can take just one more Wound. Desperately, she **'breaks something that makes the surroundings more dangerous.'** She hits the giant stone statue of Anur with her sword, in the knees, and the statue begins to topple. Ashme, what do you do?

Alex (Ashme): "I have one Heart left from Kushana. I'm going to spend it to **INFLUENCE** her and ask her to surrender."

Jean (GM): "Unfortunately, things have escalated way beyond that. You can see it in Kushana's eyes, hurt and terrified but still desperately proud. Keep the Heart to spend later. Meanwhile, the statue is falling on both of you. What do you do?"

Alex (Ashme): "I want to **BOLT**. I invoke 'who leaps first and asks questions later.' That's a +0. Oh, I got a 7. A miss."

Tomás (Tahara): "Can I spend a Heart of Ashme's to bump it up to an 8?"

Jean (GM): "You bet. As Ashme jumps, you pull her out of the way of the statue right before it crashes down in the middle of the temple, crushing the altar."

Malika (Melem): "Was Kushana crushed too?"

Jean (GM): "You can't tell yet. Everything is dust and rubble. She might be under there, or she might have escaped. But, as you cough in the dust, a figure like a spectral flame rises from the shattered statue, looking furious. It's Anur, who has descended from the heavens to avenge his desecrated temple."

Anna (Ashme): "Run!"

CHAPTER

Playing the World

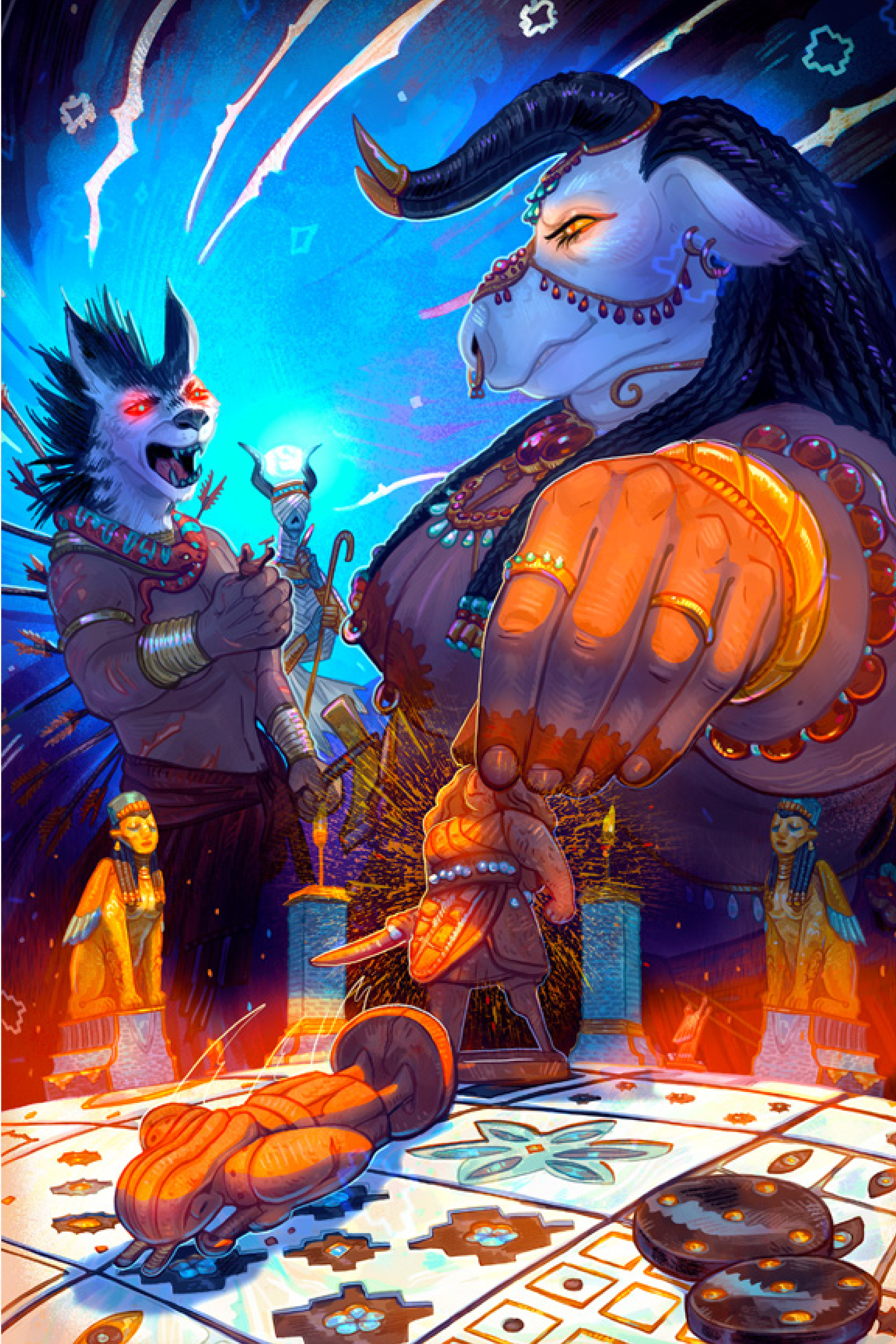
Rather than typical high fantasy, which is set in a simulacrum of medieval Europe, sword & sorcery often takes place in far-off lands. This highlights a recurring problem in how some of us imagine our fantasy. Many of us, especially white Westerners, can all too easily call on an idea of "the East": high desert, tropical jungles, excessive cruelty and excessive pleasures, and "exotic" lands and peoples. But ***Defy the Gods*** isn't set in some strange or exotic place: it's home.

The following details may help you portray this world more fully, so you and the players don't accidentally recreate Conan or Sinbad movies.

Playing People

Take care to give all named side characters relatable, human motivations—even hardened enemies.

If you're the kind of GM who describes physical appearances, describe everyone, not just those who look different from you, and try to describe more than one thing about them. Picture their dress, accessories, and hair style. Imagine their customs, empathetic values, clothing, and foodways. That will make them feel more real.



Using a classic fantasy trope going back to the ***Odyssey***, everyone around the central sea speaks the same language. Please don't affect an accent to imply foreignness.

See more about powerful and marginalized people in "Playing the City" below.

Playing the Pantheon

The Pantheon rules with absolute power. They are a backstabbing cartel that, most of the time, remembers that their continued rule depends on ruling jointly.

The members' domains may seem familiar or not, but by definition, these immortals are the divine order. Even if the players give you a spider god of oblivion, betrayal, and lost children, that god is a pillar of the world, one of the handful who shaped and shapes the cosmos. If they have a temple, their values are synonymous with what is healthy, valued, and good—at least for one slice of society.

The whole Pantheon agrees on some things:

- Sorcery is vile. It was right to destroy the Atlanteans for it—no matter how beautiful they were.
- Mortals must remember their subservient place in the cosmos.
- Mortals must not seek to change the divinely ordained natural order. They must live out their original social station and—to say the least—original physical form.
- Divine power belongs solely with the Pantheon. Pantheon members who entrust mortals with even a flicker of it must have a good reason.

- Mortals must not seek out areas of the earth reserved for Pantheon members.
- Mortals must not serve immortals exiled from the Pantheon.
- Above all, when their time comes, mortals must die. And *stay* dead. Can't anyone obey even the simplest commands anymore?
- Immortals never die. Not current Pantheon members, certainly.

The Pantheon also disagrees on many things:

- Which Pantheon member should be supreme.
- Which domains should belong to which Pantheon members. When domains collide, who should come out on top.
- What counts as a good reason to entrust a mortal with divine power.
- What counts as divinely ordained natural order, rather than merely another Pantheon member's exercise in vanity.
- Which mortals should have divine favor—although it is never an adventurer.
- Which Cities should have glory, and which must fall.
- Who may be exiled from the Pantheon.
- When individual mortals should die.

Portray Pantheon members as messed-up people with way too much power. They exhibit the whole range of emotional excesses. They make self-serving decisions. Each one seeks first of all to guard their own power from perceived threats by mortals and immortals alike. When backed into a corner, they will even risk plunging the world into chaos to protect their own interests.

Don't show a Pantheon member in person right away. Show their temple adepts and other mortal followers, then creatures the Pantheon member summons, then their immortal courtiers—demons, spirits—before the Pantheon member gets personally involved.

The exception is if a player triggers the **Defy the Gods** move. Even then, if it is early in the game, consider introducing a high-ranking herald instead.

Playing the City

The City is mud-brick, stone, dust, cedar timbers, bustling, hustling, hot coffee, and hot garbage. Life here feels modern, sophisticated, and harsh.

The City's laws have shoved the adventurers and their friends to its margins. At the margins, the City is often a grim place, alleviated only by community and found family. The adventurers live in the poor neighborhoods, where the powerful don't have to see them or interact with them. The laws always work against the adventurers in favor of the powerful.

The three kinds of power in the City are:

- The palace, including the City Watch and other officially sanctioned violence.
- Temple influence and cultural clout. Cults are culture.
- Wealth.

Side characters who have one usually have the others. Even those who don't often work as mutual allies to support the overall system. But the system is based on inequality, and that introduces fault lines you can exploit in your story.

At times, you may show rich citizens acting on behalf of palace rulers, or members of one prestigious cult supporting another. This reinforces the sense of the City as a cohesive, oppressive force. Other times, show a rich citizen undermining their own cult, or a dismissed courtier betraying their noble house, to demonstrate the cracks in the system.

The powerful have odd ideas about marginalized people. The stories they tell each other reinforce these ideas and reassure them of their right to power.

Their stories portray marginalized people as wretched—not only by circumstance, but in their essence:

- Anyone who breaks a law has no principles.
- Anyone who travels to other Cities is a traitor.
- Anyone who worships an improper god is godless.

- Anyone who studies sorcery has a twisted mind.
- Anyone who consorts with animals is inhuman.
- Anyone who returns from the dead is an unclean abomination.

Such people, the stories go, deserve every misfortune that befalls them—from inadequate living conditions to untimely death to their communities' erasure. And if you show curiosity about such people, let alone talk to one, then you must share their essential traits, and high society will exile you.

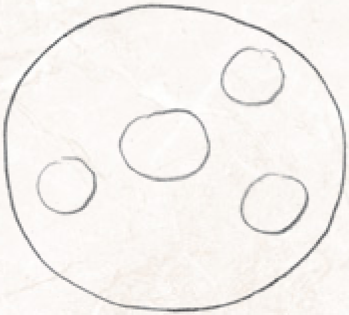
By contrast, the adventurers and their friends have a pretty good idea how the powerful live, because the powerful define everyone's world: the wealthy's possessions, the temple cults' values, and the palace's laws.

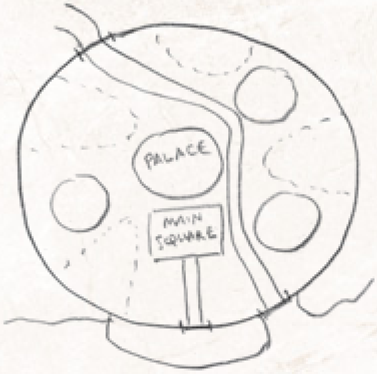
Building Your City

You may arrange your City however you like. However, a few moves ask a player to affect one or more City "districts," and it helps if you give players a sense of how the City is laid out.

The simplest way to present the City to players is this:

1. Draw a big loop for the City walls, then draw four smaller loops within it for the **palace district** and the neighborhoods around the three **temples**. The palace district is the center of political influence. The other three are centers of piety, wealth, and social influence.
2. Leave room in between them for the **main square** and **market** (perhaps near the royal palace) and the **trade districts** (dominated by the City's products as determined on the world-building sheet). In the leftover spaces, cram in all the **poor neighborhoods**, including where the adventurers live.





3. If the City is by the sea, put the **docks** just outside the walls, with gates nearby. Place **gates** for all roads, rivers, and canals leading into the City.

This is a City you can describe quickly, with wealth inequality and basic geography.

Portraying the Poor Neighborhoods

The adventurers' neighborhood embraces the adventurers; full of warm, friendly people and well-loved, familiar customs. It's everything the rest of the City is not: Neighbors readily accept differences and don't stand on ceremony. Resist the urge to portray these neighborhoods as scenes of squalor. Here, people have just enough—at least until your antagonists bear down on them.

The world-building sheet will give you a popular place or places where the adventurers like to hang out, a public event they love, and objects sacred to their community. Use these and the Guide to Fantasy Ancient Sumer (see page 214) to fill in other customs.

Pacing Antagonists

The City has layers. When introducing conflict, don't show its ruler or a temple's high adept right away. Start with the City Watch, with low-ranking messengers. Show flunkies of deputies and make the adventurers win their way to higher echelons.

Landlords of buildings in poor neighborhoods may be minor aristocrats looking to improve their cultural or financial standing.

Thieves or other criminals in the poor neighborhoods may work for the Thieves' Guild, who constantly vie with the palace for control of the City.

More ideas for City scenes are in Chapter 11 (see page 192) and Chapter 13 (see page 225). A list of names is in the Appendix (see page 275).

Playing the Wilds

The Wilds are unmapped places. Here, the adventurers leave the restrictions of the City far behind. Free, they may find unexpected intimacy, overstep boundaries, betray oaths, unintentionally give offense, become separated, and come to mean new things to each other. The Wilds harbor creatures, environmental hazards, and moments that will forever lack words.

Playing the Wilds is about destinations, environment, and creatures:

Destinations

Possible destinations or reasons for embarking include:

- Traveling to another City.
- Returning to the home City after finding something in the Wilds.
- Searching for an Atlantean ruin.
- Parleying with (or trapping) a creature who threatens the City.
- Accompanying the Wolfling to find a creature they know.

However, part of exploring the Wilds is the possibility of ending up somewhere *other* than where you meant to go. Losing your way and finding a new way.

If a player misses on an **Explore** roll, consider revealing a new destination from the list above that was not their goal. Then make it interesting, and ultimately, find ways to tie it back to the adventurers' original reasons for traveling. Connecting it to their intended destination is less interesting than offering an alternative solution for their problem or provoking possible changes to their relationships with each other.

Environment

During world-building, the players tell you what kinds of landscapes they want to encounter. This suggests the backdrop for their new experiences. However, the landscape doesn't change the meaning of the scenes on the journey.

Because this is a story game, you don't need to describe every obstacle, hour, or mile of travel. Frame each scene as an opportunity for a pivotal, personally meaningful excerpt from the longer journey. This is easier when it involves friction between the adventurers. Tools for creating friction include:

- Make someone take the lead, then make them responsible when they miss on an **Explore** roll. Take them to a location without shelter or clean water.
- Lose or destroy supplies, including food and clean water.
- Threaten them unequally with the elements or difficult terrain.

More ideas for scenes in the Wilds are in Chapter 11 (see page 197).

Make each scene just long enough to move the adventurers' stories forward. The journey's significance, rather than its geographic length, tells you how many scenes to portray.

Creatures

Whenever you need a threat, interrupt the journey with one creature, a few, or a multitude.

The Wilds are the creatures' territory, not the adventurers'. Some creatures are recognizable from real life, albeit usually much bigger. Other creatures are fantastical. Treat them equally and give them a controlling position in the terrain.

Give creatures ecological motivations: hunting for food, migrating with the seasons, guarding their territory, seeking new territory when forced to, seeking a mate, or protecting their young.

When the story needs it, let creatures speak intelligibly, without feeling constrained to make *all* creatures understand speech. These conversations should still feel uncanny: Sharing a language doesn't mean sharing values or priorities. It doesn't make the creatures tame.

More ideas for scenes with creatures are in Chapter 11 (see page 197), and more ideas for creatures—including Epithets—are in Chapter 14 (see page 240).

Playing the Legacy of Atlantis

Atlantean ruins are this game's version of classic "dungeons": Their unfamiliar layouts seem maze-like, sorcerers and creatures take up residence there, and powerful artifacts wait to be uncovered.

However, the game is not interested in winning gold or killing creatures. Like all the game's scenes, the ruins should bring the players back to risky emotional connections and the lure of treacherous power. In this vein, the ruins are places to connect with a once-proud people who dared to live without fear of the Pantheon or Death.

A people who wish, however much in vain, to live again.

When introducing Atlantis, usually don't start with a ruin. Offer rumors of an artifact, a map to a ruin, a person changed by going to a ruin, or some other vestige of the Atlantean past. The artifact may have powers, or it may simply be a powerful symbol of past glory. The vestige, in turn, leads the adventurers to the ruin.

Then, depending on where the ruin is, consider making the journey there or getting inside hard. This makes the adventurers show how much they want it.

Alternatively, make the ruin frighteningly close and open, with its emanating effects posing an immediate danger to people the adventurers care about.

Once in the Ruin

Everything here is arcane and sorcerous. Physical laws from the rest of the mortal realm may not apply. Over the course of several delves, the ruins start out mystifying, grow more familiar, and ultimately present a legacy that the adventurers may connect with.

In these places, invite the players to show something unprecedented about their adventurers. Ask them how the new environment changes them. Make Atlantis's distant history crucially relevant to their relationships or the truth of one of their Epithets.

The principle of love triangles applies here: Create an opportunity that means different things to different adventurers. Unlike usual love triangles, the desired thing may be an arcane mechanism or the surviving will of dead, unearthly beings.

More ideas for encounters in Atlantean ruins are in Chapter 13 (see page 203).

Playing Death and the Underworld

Death is the end of hope. The Underworld is its bleak repository of souls. *All* mortals end up here: lost loves, family members, friends, and enemies. Humans, creatures, Atlanteans, and perhaps even dead gods exist here.

The Underworld is the ultimate use of the GM move, **"Introduce a portent of future woe."** Death threatens every adventurer, even if the game's mechanics don't emphasize it. Shadow them with Death: kill a familiar side character, or introduce the ghost of someone an adventurer knew well. Make it clear these people still exist, somewhere, in a way.

Venturing into the Underworld Itself

Even more than with Atlantean ruins, getting to the Underworld should be significant. Even if it's easy to get in, getting out should seem nearly impossible.

The Underworld is *down*. The adventurers can reach it simply by descending far enough. But the path into it is eerie—it disconnects the adventurers from life. Make going in costly. Break irreparable things. Side characters whom the adventurers leave behind should expect this to be their last farewell.

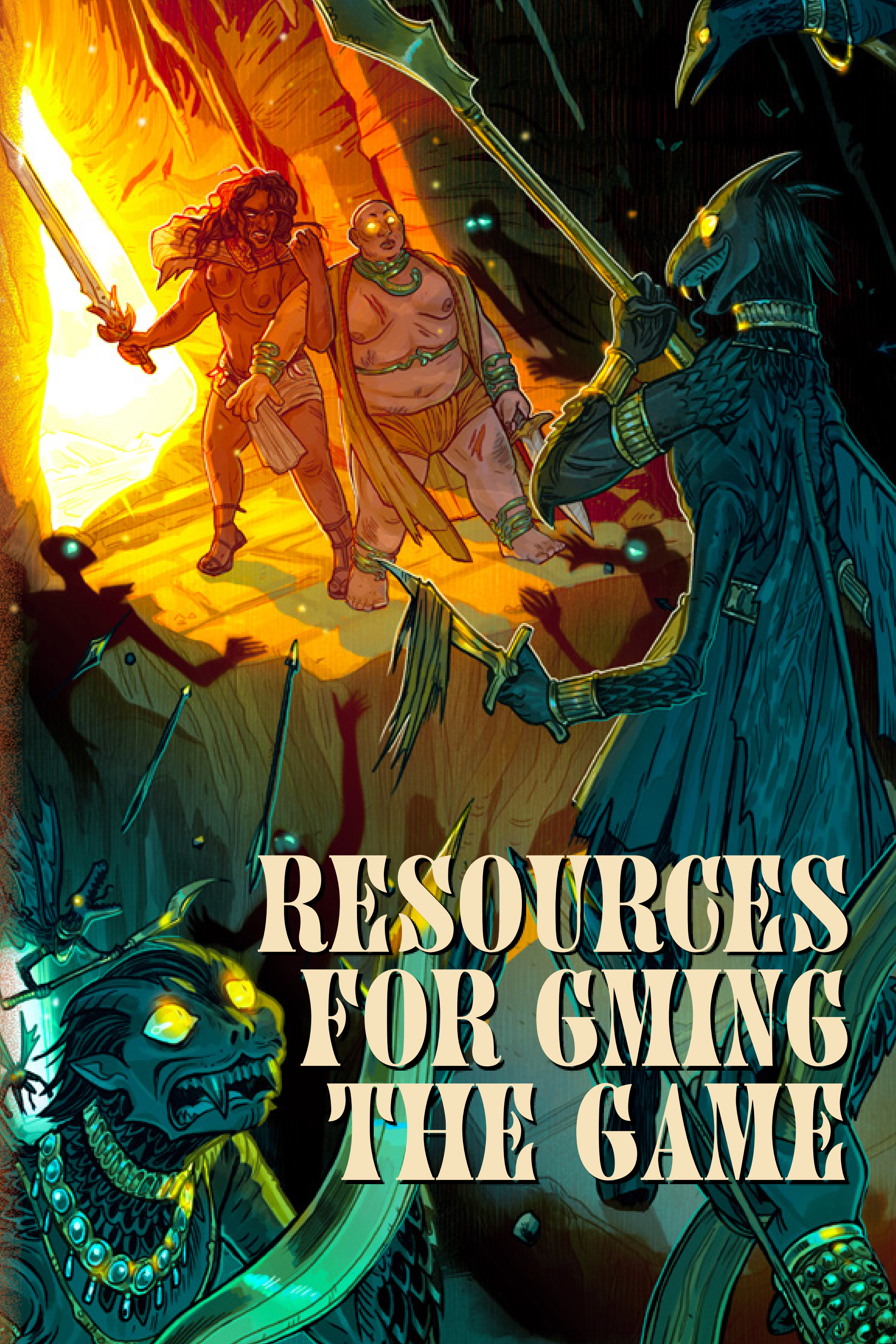
Death's Lieutenants

The Underworld is a kingdom founded to collect mortal souls and never, ever let them go. It takes many hands to work this empire. Demons keep track of dead shades, treat them appropriately, and guard the entrances. Give them ranks and offices that increase in power. Some shades themselves may be helping the Underworld function.

Unless the players specify otherwise, Death is a Pantheon member. If no member has that domain yet, introduce a new member, or ask the players to make them. It may be a humble servant of the principle of mortality, or it may actively keep the machinery humming.

Escaping the Underworld

Despite Death's best efforts, however, some shades *do* leave. The Underworld's worksheet describes how this happens. Make escape difficult, even for the visiting adventurers. The players will doubtless have to roll some burning successes or use Doom moves. Moves that mark Fire are the surest way to break out of this stronghold.



RESOURCES FOR GMING THE GAME

CHAPTER

Adventure Seeds and Settings

Adventures in the City

The City is where you start. It's a scene of oppressive laws and beloved community. It's where the royal palace and the temple cults grind up you and those you hold dear. It bustles in the market and main square, and it murmurs in back alleys and bedrooms.

In Good Company

You're in your own neighborhood and among friends, at your favorite gathering place. People accept you for who you are. What memories do you make here that you will savor forever?

Revenant: Someone across the room locks eyes with you. For that moment, they seem to see right into you. Go talk to them. Who are they? Who do they seem to see you as, and why do you want badly to be the person they see?

Sailor: What a night. What a crowd. Everyone loves you here. You let yourself stop hustling and networking and just have fun. Who captures your interest in this moment? What promise do they make you, and what promise do you make in return?

Sorcerer: Despite its bronze-and-clay crudeness, tonight, the human world offers charms to rival anything you've read about Atlantis. Who draws you out of your shell, and how? What hole do they fill that you may never have been aware of before now?

Sword: You love everyone here—even the ones you just met. *Especially* them. Who here do you swear undying friendship with? What vulnerability do they share with you? How might they call on you to protect them and make good on your oath?

Vessel: This is a good group. Strangely, even without your patron here, or anyone who knows them, nothing seems missing. What informal communion do you find here that, for all its transient normality, rivals the connection with your patron? Does it draw you deeper in, frighten you, or both? How do you reconcile that feeling?

Wolfling: The smell of humans in here is almost unbearably strong. But the body language is almost all friendly. Who here is exhibiting *other* body language? Is it a threat, an invitation to intimacy, both, or neither? How do you make imperfect sense of what you sense?

In the Wrong Neighborhood

You're in a posh neighborhood where the wealthy, influential, and pious live. How did you end up here? How do you offend someone or put yourself in a difficult position here?

Revenant: A whisper of the right thing to do here is in the corner of your mind, either from your past life or from a fellow shade when you were dead. If you listen to it, how does it pull you back toward that hated non-existence? If you don't listen to it, what does that unlock in you while making the situation worse?

Sailor: The high-society types here look insular and backward compared to the people of other Cities you've visited. How do you try to broaden the horizons of one of the citizens of this neighborhood by sharing your experience? Why does this offend them? Did you mean for it to?

Sorcerer: Atlantis, now *there* was a place of refinement. How do you try to make the people or place here more like your understanding of Atlantis? Why do you fall short?

Sword: The wealthy and cultured are strangely alluring. What's more, at least one of them seems to see you as a prized asset. How do they try to assert control over you? Why does it escalate until only violence can solve the problem?

Vessel: Someone here discreetly shows your patron's sign. Unlike you, they are not public about their worship. Do you expose them? If so, how does this draw all eyes to them? If not, how does your patron express their disappointment in you?

Wolfling: The City is confusing enough, but this neighborhood is too much. What evidence of cultural refinement do you openly mock? Condemnation is swift. What do you do in the face of it? How can you tell that your mockery has secretly shaken the person you scorned?

On the Wrong Side of the Law

A group of guards from the City Watch have the drop on you. Maybe one or more of you broke the law, or they just claim you did. But it's not that simple, is it?

Revenant: One of the guards recognizes you from your past life. Worse, they want to defer to your authority. Do you claim it? What ripple effects do you fear this will have when word gets out?

Sailor: One of the guards is your ex, from before they were a guard. How did you humiliate them back then? What will you do to get out of having to face them?

Sorcerer: In this tense moment, you sense a desire from one or more of the guards to be something more or other—a different role, ability, or form. A different life. How do you address this?

Sword: You think you could take at least one of these guards. Unfortunately, you know him and used to care for him. Is this from your past time as a guard yourself, or a different life that you two shared? What would it mean to you to kill him?

Vessel: You think the guards might be open to hearing about your patron. How does your evangelizing fall flat?

Wolfling: You either don't know what law your group broke or don't care. How do you show your indifference to the guards, and how does this complicate the scene?

Breaking into the Halls of Power

One night, you decide to burgle a temple or the royal palace. You may have planned it meticulously, or it may be a dangerous whim. Either way, each of you brings something to the heist.

Revenant: The dead cling to this place. How has this place wronged them? How do they ask you to make it right? What will it cost you and your friends to do so?

Sailor: Ordinarily, this kind of mission would be suicide. Fortunately, you know someone on the inside. What position do they have that makes them essential to the heist? Why do they owe you?

Sorcerer: This operation requires focus and present-mindedness—not your strong suits. What unrelated thing are you thinking of when your friends need you? At the last moment, what do you pull from your distracted thoughts to try to be useful?

Sword: Your friends need you, and you are ready to die for them. Killing enemies is easy. Whom do you encounter that you need *not* to kill? Why is that? Do you make the right choice?

Vessel: This is the seat of power of someone great: a Pantheon member, their blessed mortal authorities, or something else. How has your patron armed you against them, even here? What do you encounter that makes you question whether your patron is strong enough to overcome them?

Wolfling: Human laws and customs are confusing, which makes this one of the most confusing places in the City. What symbol do you encounter that you don't understand? What do you do to it or in its presence that endangers you and your friends?

Adventures in the Wilds

Because this is a story game, you do not describe every obstacle, hour, or mile of travel. Each scene is a pivotal, personally meaningful excerpt from the longer journey. The scenes should be just long enough to move the characters' stories forward. The more significant the journey, the more scenes from it you want to portray.

At a Vista

You find a breathtaking vista on a hill overlooking a valley or reed marsh, atop a waterfall, at the highest point on an island, or on a cliff in the forest or mountains. How does it make the world seem bigger? What hope does it kindle in you that you couldn't imagine in the City?

Revenant: You must have seen sights this beautiful in your past life, but they never pierced your heart like this one does. What do you resolve to do with your limited time back under the sun?

Sailor: Here, there is no one to charm—just you, your friends, and the view. Who else do you wish were here with you right now?

Sorcerer: Despite yourself, you find the view beautiful. You memorize every detail, etching it in your mind forever, as if it were a spell. How is it like a spell, and how is it different?

Sword: You never thought you would live to see something like this. Inevitably, you think of someone you killed. Are you glad they're not here? What would you tell them if they were?

Vessel: Despite all that is beautiful about the view, the bigger part is sharing it with your friends. Whose shoulder do you lean on? What about your patron's reaction surprises you?

Wolfling: You're surprised how moved all your friends are by this. Yes, it's beautiful, fleeting, and commonplace, like most of life. What do their reactions tell you about being human? What part do you want to share?

Camp Conversation

You are together at a camp fire, lying under the stars or in the dark of a tent, or listening to the waves belowdecks at sea. What secrets do you share? Why couldn't you say this in the City? Look for moments of trust, misunderstanding, or passion.

Revenant: Some uncertainty gnaws at you—about your new identity or your right to be aboveground. What is it? How much of it do you share?

Sailor: For once, you listen more than you talk. Who do you enjoy listening to the most? Will you keep what you hear to yourself?

Sorcerer: At length, mostly uninterrupted, you vividly recount a story you once read in an Atlantean scroll. What truth about yourself is buried in the story? Do you think your friends pick up on it?

Sword: At the risk of making your friends doubt you, you share a time when you were afraid or made a decision you regret. Why do you share it? How is that moment still relevant today?

Vessel: Like the truest things your patron has shared with you, you communicate without words. Do you do it with a kind act, an intimate gesture, or a job that no one else wants to do? What does it mean in that moment?

Wolfling: You're used to being *outside* the firelight, the creature in the dark. What does it mean to be drawn close into human company? Who lures you the most?

Crossing Paths

Here in the midst of desolation, a stranger hails you. They may be friendly, or merely pretending to be. But they seem well provisioned.

Revenant: This person seems like who you want to be, in some way. What quality do they have that you wish you possessed?

Sailor: This person is useful. What line are you already preparing to use on them?

Sorcerer: This person is asinine. How can you keep them from wasting yours and your friends' time?

Sword: This person is trouble. What gives it away to you?

Vessel: This person is ungodly. How is that attractive?

Wolfling: This person is an unwelcome intrusion of civilization. What weakness do you see in them?

Finding a Path

You are at a river or marsh winding out of sight among the reeds, a seemingly endless cave, a daunting mountain climb, the sea with unknown lands sighted ahead, or crisscrossing boar tracks leading off into the forest. Who among your friends do you blame for getting you into this situation? Who makes you think you might find your way again?

Revenant: The "new you" beckons somewhere, just out of sight. You remember feeling so sure of who that was. How do you put on a front of certainty for your friends? What problems does that cause?

Sailor: You've been here before, and you know a place you all can go from here. Unfortunately, you don't want to admit that. What would that reveal about you that you'd like to keep secret, or what obligation would that put you in that you would rather avoid?

Sorcerer: This place is supremely confusing. Nothing in your scrolls prepared you for it, ever. How do you try to hide how lost you are from your friends?

Sword: Nobody appreciates you here. You almost wish for danger, so you can show everyone your worth. What do you willfully misread as danger? How do you unintentionally make it more dangerous?

Vessel: Your patron seems to want to guide you away from your friends. What is so important that it can't wait? How does your patron's urging ignore basic physical necessity?

Wolfling: You know exactly the best thing to do in this habitat or the advantageous place to go, but you do a bad job communicating it to your friends. Why won't they listen to you?

Raging Elements

The river explodes into rapids, the marsh flash-floods, the mountains collapse in an avalanche, the tunnel caves in, the heaving sea erupts into titanic swells, or a furious thunderstorm erupts on land. You may be able to reach safety—possibly at a terrible cost.

Revenant: The tempest reminds you of the demon judges of mortals in the Underworld. What judgment do you feel they are rendering on you and your friends?

Sailor: If you are at sea, what orders do you bark? If you are not at sea, what makes you wish you were?

Sorcerer: What do you lose that you can never replace? Why don't you care?

Sword: Heedless of safety, you laugh in the face of the storm, greeting fire with fire and quake with quake. What avoidable situation does this put you in?

Vessel: What peace do you find that makes everything seem to be happening in slow motion? What does this let you do?

Wolfling: The elements reign supreme. It never helps to argue with them; one must bend. How do you show humility? Who do you most hope they don't take from you?

Running Low

Food and fresh water are too scarce to waste. You have insufficient protection from the threatening elements. Protective clothing and tools are proving ineffective.

Revenant: You're not used to needing basic physical necessities. You're still not sure you deserve them. How do you finally express your needs?

Sailor: You put on a brave face to keep morale up. What distraction do you offer? Do you think it's appreciated?

Sorcerer: You may have allowed crucial food and supplies to become lost or ruined. What happened? If you were at fault, do you own up to the fact?

Sword: You hate to see your friends suffer. What do you give away that you would be wiser to keep for your own needs?

Vessel: Confusingly, your patron has not provided everything that you or your friends need. As you try to retreat to that ethereal bond, what brings you back to the present moment and your friends' hardship?

Wolfling: You know how to take what you need. In desperate times, the weak yield to the strong. How do you keep from stealing what one of your friends needs to go on?

Stalked

A giant, predatory creature is hunting you, out of reach of combat, unseen but always felt. It's just a matter of time before it closes in.

Revenant: In its single-minded hunt, the creature is self-assured—utterly itself. What harsh lessons do you learn from it?

Sailor: How do you attempt to parley with the creature? Why does it backfire?

Sorcerer: You can identify the creature by its signs: its spoor, its tracks, its smell. How does that knowledge not help you?

Sword: What does feeling powerless before this creature bring out in you?

Vessel: What gives you reason to doubt that your patron will protect you and your friends?

Wolfling: Despite the creature's size, you know uncommon hunger or desperation must be driving it to stalk humans for prey. How do you attempt to satisfy its needs, and what difficulties does this cause?

Trespassing

You stumble into a large clearing fenced in by reeds, a den beneath tree roots, a nest of sticks on a high cliff, or a glade among the trees. Creatures are here—drinking, feeding, migrating, mating, or hunting. They notice you, and you are unwelcome. Escape is difficult; you must face them.

Revenant: With Death close at hand, how do you attempt to show the creatures your friendship with it?

Sailor: Here and now, the creatures are smarter than you. How can you tell?

Sorcerer: What evidence of sorcery do you see, and why is it to the creatures' advantage?

Sword: What tactical advantage do the creatures have over you?

Vessel: What gesture of submission do you make? Why is its meaning difficult to convey?

Wolfling: How do the creatures make you feel more frail, defenseless, and human than ever?

Upon Arrival

Whether you end up where you intended or somewhere else entirely, you have arrived. Who are you closer to, and who have you grown further from? What do you most want to take with you from your travels? What experience would you not trade away for anything?

Adventures in Atlantean Ruins

When the adventurers delve into a ruin, anything can happen. Make every situation significant to the adventurers' arcs and relationships.

Over the course of the adventurers' story, explorations of Atlantis fall into three broad categories, generally in this sequence:

1. Feeling lost, confused, or alienated from Atlantis.
2. Growing more familiar with lost Atlantean ways.
3. Coming face to face with the legacy of Atlantis; choosing whether to embrace it.

Possible settings and prompts for each category follow.

Alienation

Labyrinth

You wander maze-like halls with no apparent rhyme or reason, circling back on your tracks or entering rooms that seem the same but are new to you. You can barely discern that the layout made sense to the Atlanteans.

Articulated Room

A large, round room dotted with pillars. Its floor is made of a series of concentric rings. When you interact with the writing on the pillars, the rings move in alternating directions. Some flagstones in the floor are missing, exposing titanic bronze gears beneath, and darkness below them. The moving floor and pillars may disorient you or make you exit through a different doorway than you entered.

Orrery

A large room, dominated by a clockwork orrery close overhead. It shows stars and planets—considered by most people today to be Pantheon members traveling across the sky—in unfamiliar constellations. For inscrutable reasons, it includes enormous blades and counterweights. It may still move, or it may be frozen at the moment of the ruin's destruction.

Gem Room

A seven-sided, brass room that is somewhere between a workshop and a jewelry gallery. On brass pedestals around the room are six many-colored gems, each the size of your heart, cut in the shapes of various creatures. Flames flicker inside them. Picking up a gem causes it to activate. Roll:

1. A bolt of ruby fire shoots out, burning even stone.
2. A square, topaz gem starts hidden machinery working, deep within the walls. Rooms rearrange themselves.
3. A clean, citrine beam transforms any people and things that it touches, uncontrollably.
4. Emerald masks appear; if you put them on, they change your appearance.
5. A sapphire flame blazes in your thoughts, resolving into an image of a nearly indecipherable task, or a person who speaks earnestly but incomprehensibly.
6. Delicate, amethyst creatures appear and gain substance.

Looking-Glass Room

You find a room containing large, oval mirrors, as tall as a person, made of crystal and mounted on an array of silver crane arms. When you look into them, you see worlds wondrous, heart-piercing, and horrific. You cannot reach the people you see there or make them notice you.

Alienating Prompts

- **Revenant**: What if the Atlanteans were in league with Death? How can you make your friends turn back before you all blunder into the Underworld's clutches?
- **Sailor**: Your schemes to make sense of the place, or even track your location, are failing. Do you find the utter mystery of this place sinister or enticing? Why?
- **Sorcerer**: You remember reading about these halls. You see them as though still bustling with life, although you cannot explain them. How does your mind drift into Atlantean ways, and how does this alienate you from your friends?
- **Sword**: Your surroundings baffle you. All the more reason to cut through them. How does your destruction endanger your friends and complicate your journey?

- **Vessel**: Atlantis seems strangely godless and devoid of temples. Do you think they mocked the gods, including your patron? Or did they create their *own* gods … including your patron?
- **Wolfling**: Everything smells strange here. What seems most unnatural about this place? How can you interfere with it or make it wilder?

Growing Familiar

Map Room

The floor of this room is covered in a large, detailed map made of brilliantly colored, inlaid stones. Several have fallen out. Movable figurines of stone and crystal lie scattered around the map. The map shows a much narrower sea, with dozens of cities or other communities dotted around it. Looking at it, you can see how it relates to your present world.

Solitary Wizard

You find a sorcerer who has taken up residence in the ruin. They know the place intimately and navigate it with ease. The scrolls and arcane devices here are theirs alone—or were until you arrived.

They are idiosyncratic, unused to human company, and suspicious of you—especially the Sorcerer. Their diet of mutated mushrooms, berries, and leaves that grow here only exacerbates their mistrust.

They can cast several spells at will, although it costs them. They are ready to use all their knowledge against you. What do you want that keeps you in their space?

Creature's Nest

Libraries provide perfect feeding grounds for a greater sphinx, who can thrive just by eating the library's old scrolls. However, the shredded remainders of scrolls either lack nutrition or, worse, pollute the sphinx's mind with misinformation. What questions do you ask it?

Other creatures are drawn to the hovering Atlanteans' shades, or the buried engines' warmth, or the taste of foods that grow only here. What can they tell you about Atlantis?

The "Trespassing" scene in the Wilds (page 201) may help also.

Game Room

You find a room centered around a large game board. It shows a schematic of the planes of existence and the cycles of time. A dozen small, carefully carved crystal figurines stand at different points along it, tracing destinies that you can read. Thousands of small alcoves line the walls, holding similar figurines. They are all abstracted, seeming to represent types of people more than individuals: scholarly, ignorant, violent, flirtatious, devoted, or self-absorbed, and thousands of others, subtly varied. Each one animates briefly as your gaze passes over it. Placing it on the board changes reality. Which ones call to you?

Transformations

You find a pit that leads straight to the Underworld or the Abyss. Suspended in it by inconstant airs is a golden spiral, artfully interleaved with spirals of silver, brass, and unknown metals. As they rise, spinning on a breeze from below, your surroundings transmute—stone to crystal, crystal to gold, gold to reeds, and on, before the spirals sink back down. You feel alluring possibilities of change in mind and body. Which change do you embrace?

Familiarizing Prompts

Revenant: The Atlanteans seem to have held no fear of Death. Were they correct? How was their idea of the afterlife different from the one you experienced?

Sailor: Someone you loved came this way. What choices did they make? How did this place change them? Would you choose the same?

Sorcerer: What techniques or arcane knowledge do you envy here? In what ways is Atlantis starting to seem different than you always imagined?

Sword: To what efforts of the Atlanteans do you wish you could have lent your strength? What other efforts would you have opposed?

Vessel: You see signs that the Atlanteans may have had links to your patron. What makes them seem more worthy than you of your patron's love?

Wolfling: You see evidence of a past Wilds, different than the regions you know, integrated into the Atlanteans' lives in different ways. How do you mistrust this world? How do you envy it?

Legacy's Embrace

Deciphered Past

You find murals and monuments that describe the Atlanteans' achievements. The Sorcerer finds a library of scrolls, once stacked in orderly, diamond-shaped shelves, now collapsed; only a few are salvageable. They all tell of people nearly as different from each other as from you; who failed as often as they succeeded, and who kept trying. They fed wild ambitions. They engineered their own future. Most of all, they wanted more time for themselves and their children. What speaks to you most about their lives?

Unfinished Work

You come across the foundations of a vast tower made of seamlessly joined stones as broad as the main square back home and rising at least thirty feet. It may be Pantheon-blasted or merely unfinished. A staircase to nowhere spirals up the walls' inner surface. Scattered within its circumference, you see shining, jewel-like stars bigger than you—new lights they might have hung in the sky, had they but reached it. What do you think this unfinished work would have accomplished? How do you imagine you might complete it?

Redeemed Atlantean

A few Atlanteans roam the ruins, cursed by the Pantheon with eternal life in a changed form (see "Surviving Atlanteans" below). After you find a way to change one of them back, they look for ways to express their gratitude. They are not all-powerful. They cannot speak for all of Atlantis, and they cannot answer all your questions about their long-past civilization. Still, they may tell you a few things, and they may offer a blessing. What connection to them do you feel?

Embracing Prompts

Revenant: Atlantis shows many who reinvented themselves, sometimes after returning from Death. It seems to see you as a whole person. What dead hopes does it revive in you?

Sailor: Atlantis considers you a citizen of a vast, varied world: Vast enough to include all your loves past and future, known and unknown. What makes you feel like you have a say in this world?

Sorcerer: Atlantis has always been your private realm, too delicate to expose to others. Now, it seems solid, something you can build on and share. What does this open up in you?

Sword: Atlantis welcomes your belonging without demanding your submission. What peaceful rest might you find somewhere within it? How may you bring that peace with you as you journey?

Vessel: Atlantis seems to welcome your patron as well as you. How does it blur the line between mortal and immortal? What does this mean for your relationship?

Wolfling: Atlantis seems neither human nor animal. It seems to recognize you in all your complexity. How does this let you relax in a way that you haven't before? What of this recognition will you bring to the City? To the Wilds?

Surviving Atlanteans

The Atlanteans are not gone completely—a few linger on, changed, cursed by the Pantheon. Here in the ruins, you may find them, and they may recognize you.

There are many Atlantises and many kinds of Atlanteans. Some may have been plant people; others may have been elementals of fire and ice. Resist the urge to make it all make sense, and feel free to put them all in your game.

- **The Changed Lovers:** The Pantheon has cursed a group of lovers to share a changeable body. They may become an eagle, a wolf, or a serpent, but they will never know each other's touch.
- **The Dryads:** Ghostly spirits float around, mournfully looking for a tree that no longer grows. It was their home. Maybe you can grow them a new tree where they can live in happiness. They point you toward a large, gnarled seed pod.
- **The Guardian:** A heavy, jointed, bronze statue walks into view, its sculpted head resembling that of an animal. In its chest, behind a small glass pane, is a dancing flame: the Atlantean's inextinguishable spirit. The gods have commanded them to guard a sacred or forbidden place, but they long to be relieved of their duty—and their current body.

- **The Mirror-Trapped:** The Pantheon has trapped a group of Atlanteans in the world behind mirrors, where light never enters. They need someone to pierce the mirrors, let light enter that unlit realm, and reach out to grab their hand. Until then, the imprisoned Atlanteans may appear to you only in dreams.
- **The Pantheon's Assassin:** A deathless spirit called Antug animates a floppy, humanoid form made of purple cloth, wielding a long sword. Where its face should be is hood-shrouded darkness. It speaks few words in a hollow voice and longs to be redeemed. Its only trusted companion is its steed, an enormous black-headed ibis who carries him on fell missions.
- **The Puppeteer:** A humanoid body of fine, articulated steel plates walks into view. Where its head should be is a dome of glass. Inside the dome, you see what looks like a pale muscle, extending dozens of fine, tentacular fronds deep into the assembly of metal plates below it.

  It has no speech, but it makes itself understandable with the suit's articulated steel fingers. Without some sort of vehicle—this armor or a living body—it would wither and die. It may live inside a human body and share consciousness with it without erasing the original person.
- **The Sundered:** Tired sages wander the halls, doling out ineffectual blessings. Elsewhere, sinister villains creep through corridors, causing mischief and threatening danger. They are doomed to duel each other eternally. If they could ever drop their swords and embrace, they would become their whole selves again. Then, they could finally die and join their kin.

CHAPTER

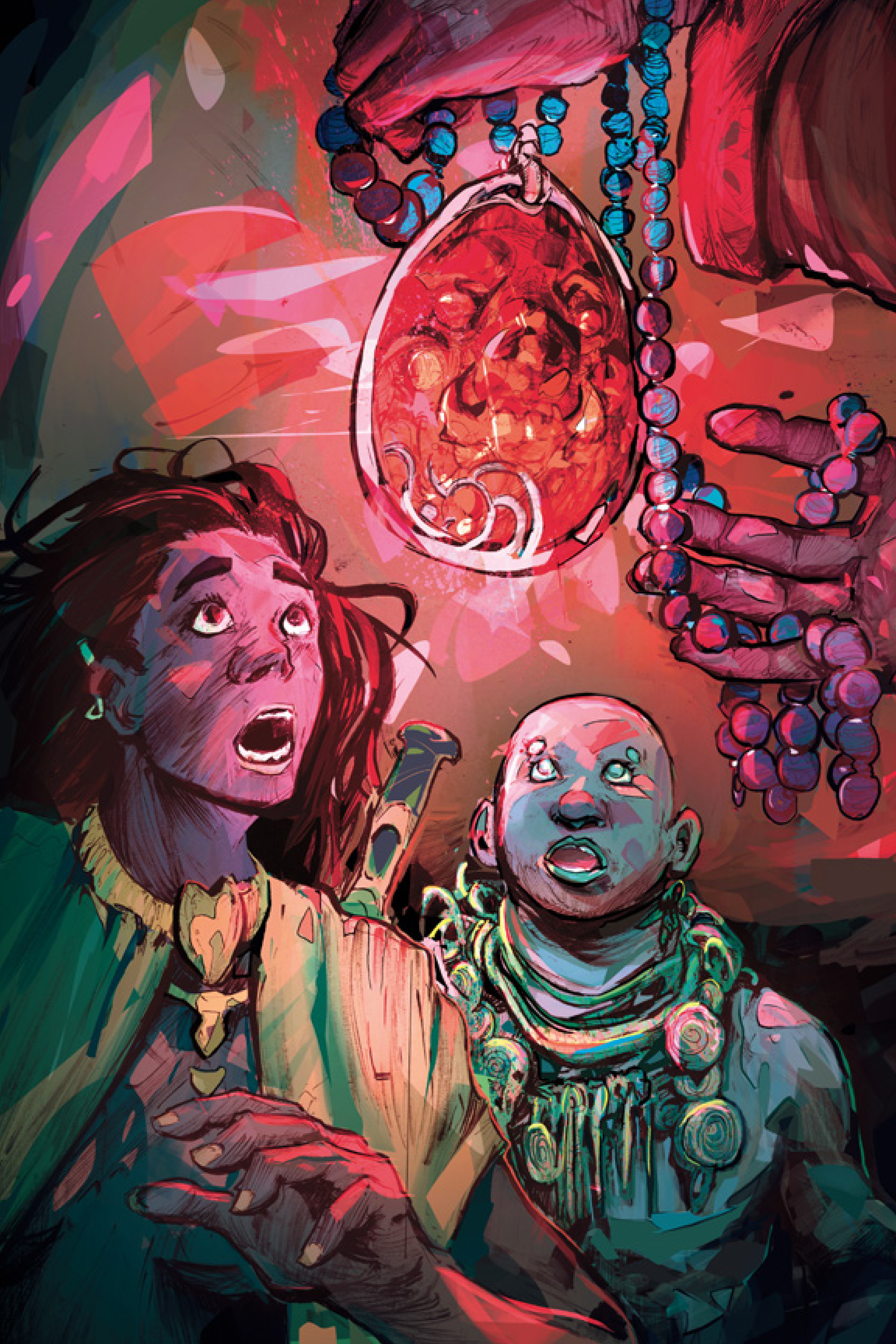
G

Defying the Gods in One Night

When you run a one-shot, there's no time for a separate Session Zero, and no time between sessions to put together a plot based on what the players offer in Session Zero. The following is an example adventure that you and your friends can build and run in a single session. It allows many of the game's features to shine—briefly but brightly.

To set it up:

1. Start the adventurers off with 3 XP and 2 Fire, so they're more likely to level up or trigger **Defy the Gods** in this game.
2. Run character creation and relationship questions as usual.
3. In world-building, build just the Pantheon and the City.
4. Instead of their usual World Forces questions, ask each player the questions below under their playbook's name.
5. Even though the players may be raring to go, start them with a brief World Scene. Ask them who in the City has the amulet, then have them play the World Scene until it's clear what the forces are going to do with it. This will give you ideas on where to take the adventure.



The Perilous Amulet

Your group had an Atlantean artifact. It looked like an amulet—a large, red gemstone on an oversized necklace strung with pearls. A face was carved into the gem, but over the ages, its contours have smoothed out and made it hard to discern. It encouraged you to stare into its depths. It seemed to promise a way out.

You were looking for a fence who would take the amulet. That was proving hard even for an Atlantean artifact. You were running out of coin and needed a buyer. But word must have got around, because the next day, an influential temple acolyte showed up, backed by a platoon of guards, and confiscated it.

Now it's in the clutches of someone high up—a temple adept or city elder, you're not sure. But you've heard that it's upsetting the City's usual balance of power. Can you retrieve your amulet and find your fortune?

For the GM:

Depending on how players answer their "amulet relationship" questions below, different powers may suggest themselves to you for the amulet. It may be destructive, it may open a portal to the Underworld, or it may bring Atlantis into the present day, for a brief, heartbreaking moment.

Whatever it does, start the game with a disastrous demonstration of its power in the adventurers' neighborhood. This raises the stakes and increases the tempo. Destroy their favorite hangout or remake a city block in supernatural ways. Have side characters from the neighborhood press the adventurers for help. If need be, endanger someone vulnerable.

The amulet's current owners may be adepts in one of the temples, officials in City government, or members of an influential family. Whoever they are, they have not yet mastered the amulet to force it to do what they want, but they are learning, and the havoc in the adventurers' neighborhood is the result of an early experiment. They may secretly have a sorcerer on staff who is pressuring the amulet, distorting its true purpose—

perhaps by placing other gems on the ancient ruby, or tying wool strings from inscribed magical tablets to the ruby.

Get wild with it. The adventurers' relationships and goals will take you the rest of the way.

Revenant

Something about the amulet seems familiar, but you can't place it. What about it reminds you of your past life or your time in the Underworld? Does it fill you with hope or dread?

Sailor

You found this amulet in an Atlantean ruin that was thick with ghosts, full of an ancient emotion. Was it grief or spite? How did they make it clear they didn't want to part with the artifact? Why did you take it anyway?

Sorcerer

You have read about the amulet in ancient scrolls. How does it seem to promise to let you meet the Atlantean age? How is its power incompatible with your current age?

Sword

You used to be close with the person who seized the amulet, and you would have died for them. Then, they cast you aside and rose in the City's politics and their temple. Why did they leave you? Since then, how have they made your life harder?

Vessel

Your patron whispers to you about the amulet. What do they think the Pantheon wants with it, and why don't they want the Pantheon to get it? What does this reveal to you about your patron that you didn't see before?

Wolfling

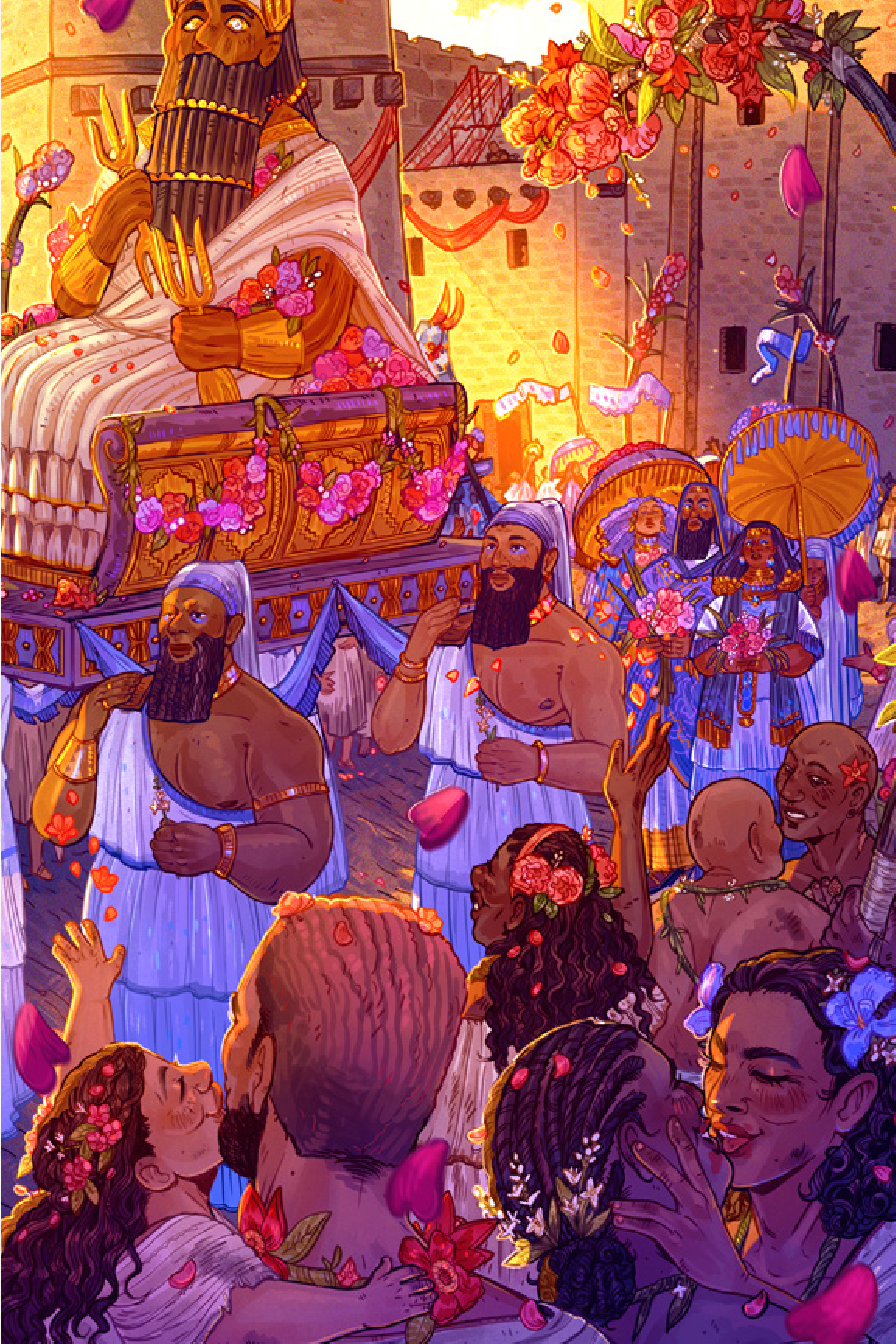
You led the Sailor to the ruin that used to hold the amulet, deep in the Wilds. Why did your animal family say they shun the place? Which adventurer made you want to enter it anyway? What about the amulet makes you want to know more about it?

CHAPTER

A Guide to Fantasy Ancient Sumer

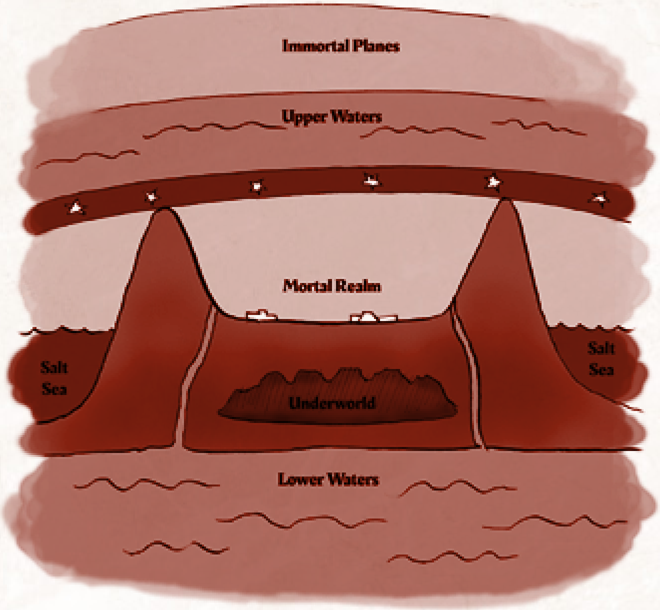
This describes the default setting for ***Defy the Gods*** in fine-grained detail. Use what works for you and leave out the rest.

The setting is inspired by real-world ancient Sumer, Akkad, and Babylon, across a wide swath of time from about 3000 to 1500 B.C.E. Adding to that temporal vagueness, it is a fantasy version of the region, with several inventions or anachronisms for the sake of telling adventure stories. These include the City Watch, coins, galleys, temple-palace conflict, Atlantis, the location of the Underworld, and (for some reason) coffee.



The Cosmos

The sages tell us this—though they have been wrong before:



The Earth is a flat plane, bounded by an endless salt sea. The Earth's mountains support the world's lapis lazuli ceiling—the sky—so that the Upper Waters above the ceiling don't drown us all. The Pantheon's gods and goddesses dwell yet higher, above the Upper Waters, but they are so luminous that we can see them moving across the sky as the planets. They open sluice gates in the crystal ceiling to bless us with rain or threaten us with storms.

The Pantheon manifests in three planes of existence. The lapis lazuli sky is their lowest plane, in which they have set the stars. The other two planes, unknowable, exist above the Upper Waters.

The mortal realm is the upper side of the Earth. Just below it in the Earth lies the Underworld—a dim, dry, dusty world that is a joyless mirror of the mortal realm. Below the Underworld are the Lower Waters, which well up through the ground as springs. These also threaten to drown us with floods.

The Salt Sea, the body of a dead god, encircles the Earth and extends forever. The Earth separates it from the Lower Waters.

The Pantheon made mortals to toil for them. If we cry out too loudly for relief, they will destroy us as they destroyed Atlantis.

Technology

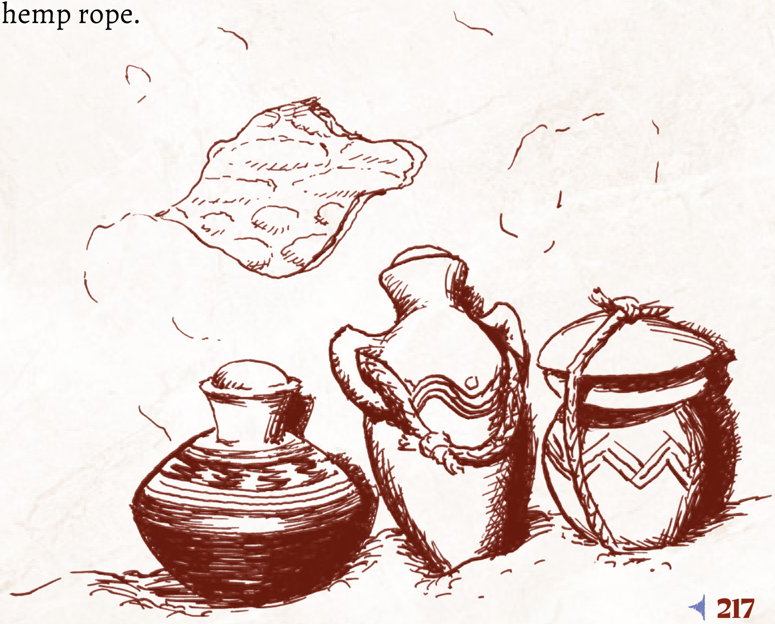
Materials

Stone is scarce in the river valleys and marshes. So, the City built its walls, temples and palaces from millions of thin, kiln-fired **mud-bricks**. They are made of clay, sand, water, and straw, mortared together and stacked to monumental sizes. Humbler structures in the City are made of unfired, sun-dried mud-brick, which crumbles more easily but is cheap and quick to make.

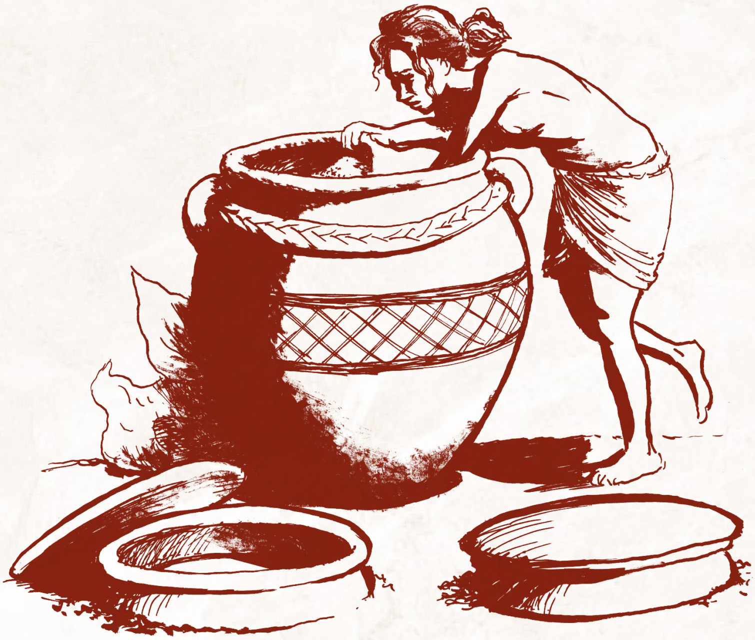
Further upriver, the foothills and mountains offer white limestone and red granite, and you'll see City walls made of enormous cut stones. Everything is massive. Buildings have stout pillars and corbel arches (that is, stacked blocks converging to a point), but rounded arches are rare.

You won't see any thin glass panes; instead, people cover their windows with cut wooden screens and fabric curtains.

Fired clay is ideal for all common uses. People drink and eat from clay cups and bowls. Clay jars of all sizes serve as bottles, jugs, barrels, and crates; they carry grain, wine, beer, and other cargo. Jars with round or pointed bases hold liquids, in a wide range of sizes up to about ten gallons. Prop them up in sand or dirt, wooden racks, or metal hoops. In ships' holds, lash them together with hemp rope.



Larger jars for bulk storage are as big as a person, with flat bases. They have many uses, from granaries to coffins. You carry them by tying hemp rope through their several small handles.



Fancier materials suit valuable objects. The rich eat and drink from brass, silver, and gold, as well as finely made clay vessels with elaborate glazes.

Bronze is the material for weapons and industrial-use objects. Daggers, swords, spearpoints, breastplates, and helmets. Gates, chains, treasure chests, plows, chariot wheels, and axles. Anything meant to withstand force and last a long time is bronze. It's expensive to make; when you see it, it's a sign of money.

Reading and Writing

Literacy is a highly specialized skill using a recently invented technique. **Few people** can do it. Nevertheless, in **business** and **law**, it has replaced memorization for transmitting knowledge. It promises to extend the reach of contracts and palace decrees indefinitely, so long as there are people who can encode and decode the symbols. Although few learn how, just about anybody with a nimble mind can do it. All "readers" decode the same receipt or edict exactly the same. It's amazing.

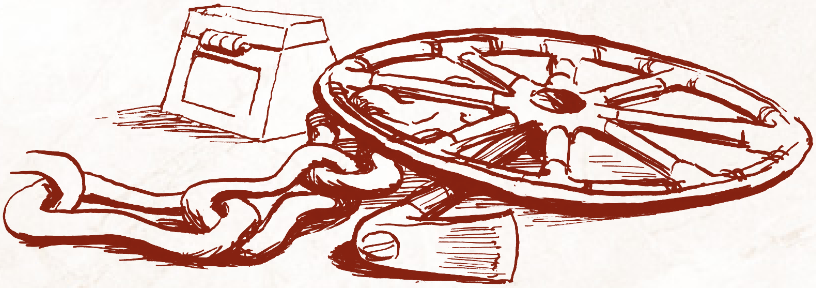
Recently, temples have started recording their songs and stories in writing, but that's a novelty. Mostly, oral poets and storytellers preserve the people's memory in song. **Memorization** is still an important skill, and just like with writing, some are better at it than others.

To write, scribes use sharpened reeds to cut triangular marks into clay tablets. They call the symbols **cuneiform**, "wedge-shaped." It's complex work. Tablets are densely covered in rows of characters. To make the words last forever, you let the tablet dry for several days, then put it in a kiln and **bake** it. Many tablets are surprisingly small—they could fit in your pocket—which also makes them less breakable.

Some say a single person invented writing as we know it—that is, made the leap from marking down a speaker's general sentiment to recording the actual sounds they made. Whoever they were, they must have been paid their weight in silver.

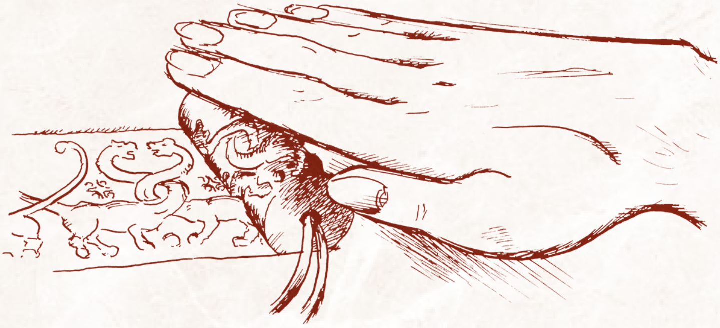
Atlantean Writing

Don't confuse literacy with the ability to read Atlantean. Unlike cuneiform on clay tablets, Atlantean is scrawled in looping ink lines, on durable, silvery sheets that roll up into **scrolls**. No one knows what the sheets are made of. One person in a hundred can read regular writing, but only one in ten thousand can read Atlantean. Reading it is difficult and prone to error, even after a lifetime of lonely study.



Cylinder Seals

Anyone with a reputation worth having owns a **cylinder seal**. It's a fired-clay or stone cylinder, small enough to wrap your hand around. You might wear it on a cord around your neck. People, plants, objects, and symbols are carved on its surface, in an arrangement unique to its owner. When you roll it on wet clay, you get a small scene: your signature.



To authenticate and secure a confidential message, the author wraps a fired-clay tablet in a wet clay envelope and rolls their seal across it. Baking the sealed envelope makes the message tamper-proof: As long as the envelope arrives intact, the recipient knows no one else has seen the message.

Clothing

People here wear skirts made of woven **linen**, woven **wool**, or **sheepskin** combed into tufts. The longer a person's skirt, the higher their status. When it's cold, wrap a wool cloak around your body.

Instead of pockets, we have leather pouches, hung from a cord or on a belt.

Felt and leather hats are popular. Shoes and sandals are made of cloth or soft leather.

Aristocrats oil and comb their hair and beards into elaborate ringlets. For those who can afford it, jewelry is elaborate: gold in wire or fine leaves, incorporating gems of lapis lazuli and carnelian. People of all genders wear headdresses, earrings, necklaces, pectorals (necklaces with a large metal pendant or amulet), brooches, arm cuffs, bracelets, finger rings, and anklets.

Food and Drink

Barley cakes, lentils, onions, fifty kinds of river fish, and lamb are all common foods, although lamb is more expensive.

Beer is common. Women brew beer in their homes, and tavern owners are generally women. You might drink it through a straw made of dried reed.

Wine is usually for the upper classes. Its tiny grapes come from the mountains. Winemakers add resin from terebinth trees to preserve it, giving wine a musky, piney taste. It is strong, and people typically mix it with water, along with honey and aromatic spices. Unmixed wine is the drink of frenzy.

Coffee is originally from abroad. It is thick and sludgy. Grind the beans fine, combine them with water in a small, long-handled brass pot, and boil the mix in the fire. Pour the coffee into a clay cup to enjoy. A coffee house is a place of free community and animated conversation.

People commonly eat and drink with clay spoons, bronze knives, and reed straws.

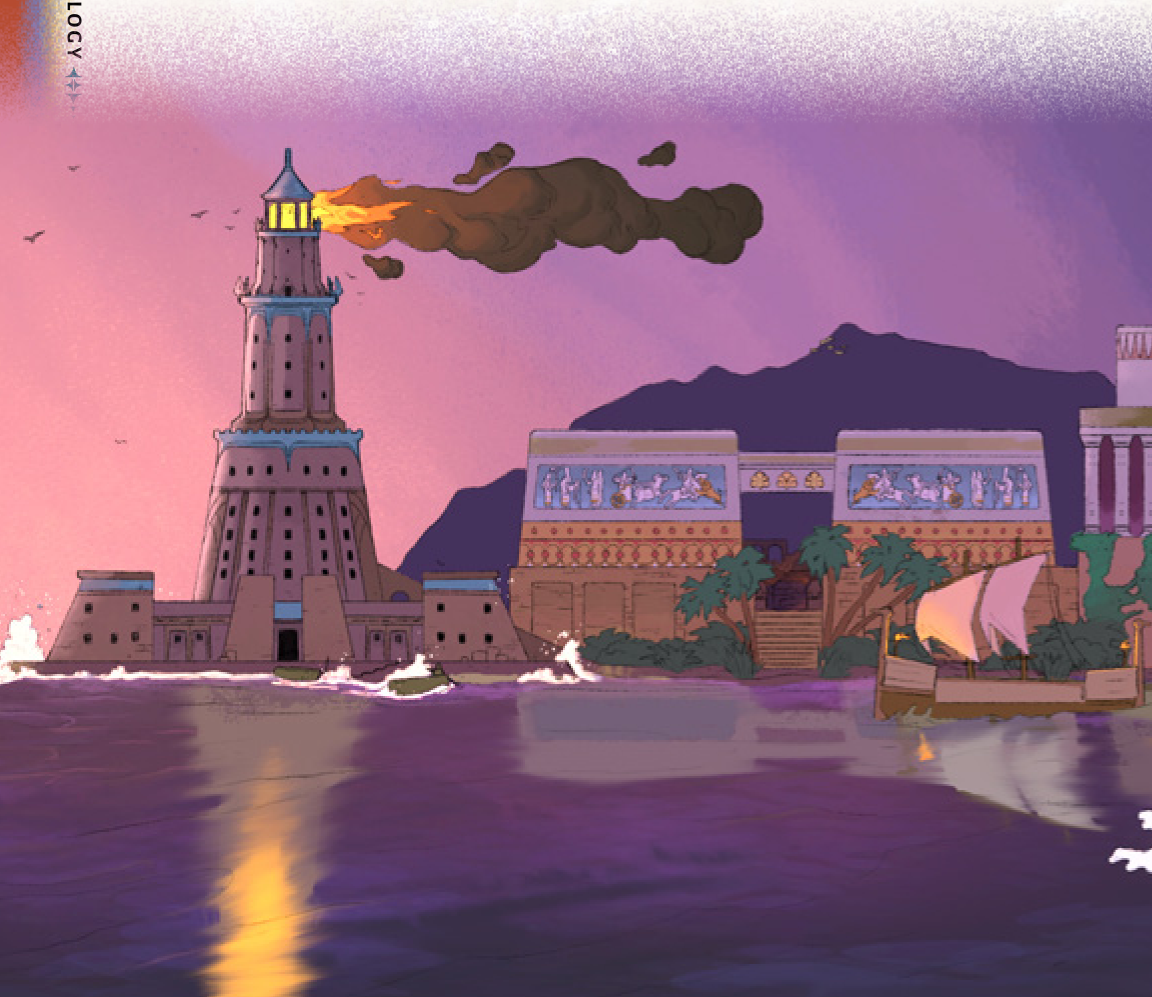
Transportation

While you'd never *ride* a **horse**, they excel at pulling speedy **chariots**—the supreme vehicle for elite soldiers and messengers. Chariots have two light, perfectly round, spoked wheels of wood and bronze, making them fast and nimble.

To pull heavily laden wagons, you can hitch up lumbering **oxen** or hard-working **onagers**. Onagers are wild asses: bigger than a donkey, smaller than a horse. The wagons typically have four wooden wheels, their edges wrapped in rawhide.

Traveling overland takes forever. Sailing is *much* faster. However, we stay in sight of the coastline whenever possible, because compasses don't exist, and storms regularly sink boats and ships. We make boats out of tightly-packed reeds, waterproofed with tar. Wooden ships, such as galleys and war galleys, are a new technique imported from abroad.

- Most **reed boats** are long and slender, made of tightly packed reeds and covered in tar. They have triangular sails. 20-foot and 40-foot boats ply the rivers, and larger **reed ships**, 60 to 100 feet long, follow the same plan and sail the seas.
- Some river boats are perfectly round paddleboats with no mast, called **kuphars**. They don't go upriver well, but they're roomy and very stable.
- **Galleys** are wooden rowing ships with one rank of oars, and a single, square sail. The sail helps on longer voyages, if the wind is blowing the right way.
- **War galleys** are fast, lean versions of galleys. They have two ranks of oars, no masts for short battles, and a wicked, bronze-wrapped ram extending from the prow at the waterline, to smash holes in enemy ships.



Time

Those who need to measure the passage of time—mostly temple adepts, City administrators, and farmers—can do so precisely.

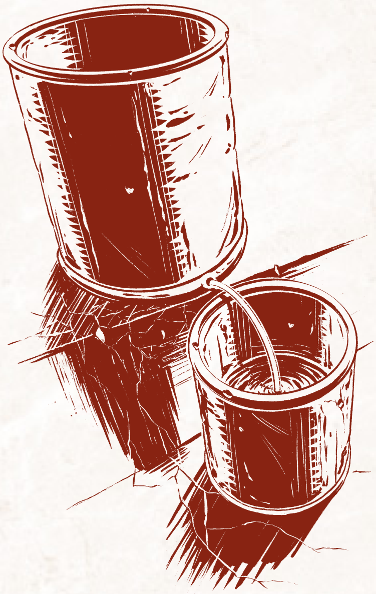
The **year** is 12 months long. Each month lasts from new moon to new moon (29 or 30 days), for 354 days. Since the solar year is important for farming, timekeepers line up the days by adding an extra month once every three years. When it comes, this month is a big event.

Summer begins with the vernal equinox; this is around when the rivers flood. The floods give life but also threaten to drown it; we tame them with irrigation. High summer is scorching hot, followed by a mild **winter** that starts with the autumnal equinox. Farmers plant crops in the fall, when the weather cools, and harvest them at the start of flood season in the spring.

Years have **names, not numbers**. Cities name the years after its ruler's exploits, so each City names the years differently.

Each **month** has four weeks. Each week is seven to nine days long. It's really very simple.

Each **day** has 12 **watches** from sunset to sunset, and 30 **gesh** in a watch.



Technicians who need to keep precise count of time use **water clocks**: a set of two clay pots with straight sides, each with a hole near the bottom. You set one pot above the other and plug the hole in the bottom pot. The time it takes for the upper pot to empty all its water into the lower one tells you how many gesh have passed, and how soon before the next watch. When the bottom pot fills, switch their order. For extra precision, use three pots, so you can switch the pots' order without losing any time.

Weight

A **talent** is what a strong laborer can carry, about 75 pounds or 34 kg. 60 **minas** make a talent. A mina is about 1.25 pounds or 0.6 kg. You can divide that again by 60 for greater precision. Other Cities may weigh these differently.

In the market, shopkeepers use standardized weights that look like small bronze statuettes, issued to them by the royal palace for a fee. They're easily recognizable, which keeps things honest—although clever forgeries do happen. Common-houses and the black market rely more on trust and relationships.

Money and Other Things of Value

Coins speed commerce. Whatever your City's coins are made of, they generally have the City's symbol stamped on them—or carved into them if they are shell or bone. Officials in the royal palace shape and issue the coins.

Silver is a helpful measure of value, although it depends how pure it is. A talent of silver is a large ingot—over a dozen year's wages for a laborer.

Another common precious metal is **electrum**, also called **green-gold**. It's a naturally occurring alloy of gold and silver. However, its gold content varies wildly, making its value hard to nail down.

Refined, **yellow gold** is harder to produce and often winds up decorating fine things in the royal palace. It's too soft to use to construct anything that sees heavy use.

Lapis lazuli is a beautiful blue stone that connotes royalty, divine blessing, and the heavens.

The City

Authority to rule flows from the Pantheon's members to the ruler and the temples' high adepts, and in turn to the City's wealthiest, most pious citizens. Rulers reinforce their precarious position by giving the wealthy and pious something to gain by supporting them and everyone else something to lose by opposing them.

Temple Cults

The pious seek to give their deities the worship they demand. A **cult** refers to the upstanding citizens who worship a particular deity, perform its rituals at the right times, and support its temple if it has one. Belonging to a cult with a temple is a sign of status. Belonging to a cult without a temple still gives you a supportive community.

The City has multiple temples, vying with each other for cultural dominance and maneuvering for political influence in the royal court. Temples keep their own guards who live in the temple full-time.

War and Security

In time of war—for land, water rights, treasure, or imperial glory—the City presses everyone into service at the levels each can afford. Everyone fields their own arms: The wealthiest, most prestigious citizens ride in on their chariots, accompanied by charioteers, spear holders, and their own company of infantry. The next most wealthy form the heavy infantry. Their armor includes thick leather cloaks studded with bronze bosses, a segmented bronze cuirass, a bronze helmet, a sword, several spears (and servants to hold them), and a shield made of layers of tough oxhide and metal bosses. The poorest are unarmored, armed with staves or just sharp rocks. Still, all must fight.

The royal palace pays the **City Watch** to keep order within the City's walls. They and the temples' guards sometimes work at cross purposes. The City Watch is a kindly guardian in the high-prestige districts, a ubiquitous warning in the artisan districts, and an unaccountable terrorist force in the poor neighborhoods.

War often means aristocrats return from the battlefield dead or dying, provoking bloody change among the City hierarchy. As battles flow back and forth, sometimes to your City's doorstep, Pantheon members start to take sides in the war.

Wealth

Wealth mostly comes from land. People with farms near the City walls can create food, hire servants, buy luxuries, and insulate themselves from the world's worst ills.

However, they surrender most of their wealth to the royal palace. The palace then doles it out to whom it chooses, usually to itself, those it favors, and its pet projects. What its tax collectors cannot gather, the City Watch will seize. This sometimes leads wealthy people to maneuver for political favor, or else plot secretly to overthrow the palace.

City life turns subsistence farmers into citizens. As artisans, technicians, or service-workers, they are wealthier, but they can no longer feed themselves; they depend on the City's economy for their survival. This reinforces the palace's authority, so long as the palace can keep the City running.

And healthy. Cities are breeding grounds for plague. With the water table so close to the surface, the sewers often back up, especially in the rainy season. Anywhere with such a dense collection of mortals will pass plague as easily as coins.

Dogs and cats roam the City as independent citizens, but they (especially the dogs) grow loyal to those who feed them. Cats will lead you to unexpected corners you'd never find otherwise. Loyal dogs will put themselves between you and the City Watch.

Gates and Ports

Coming into Port

You can tell a lot about the City from its docks, and from the wharf rats, sailors, and stevedores who work, play, or go on strike there.

In times of peace and prosperity, the docks are a hive of activity. Ships from across the known world load and unload. Flags and clothing of many Cities flash in the sunlight. There are intriguing strangers to meet, bearing news from far away.

However, in times of tyranny and war, the docks are hushed and tense as ships glide to port under the watchful eye of the navy's war galleys, greeted by stern soldiers.

Clearing Customs

This is a risky moment. Customs officials can impound your cargo or your whole ship. Backed by guards, they may decide that you are not sufficiently loyal to the City, barring you entry or throwing you into the dungeon on the accusation that you have brought a plague or a foreign curse. You may try to distract them with charm or daunt them with dread authority. However, word of the latter will spread quickly.

The Caravanserai

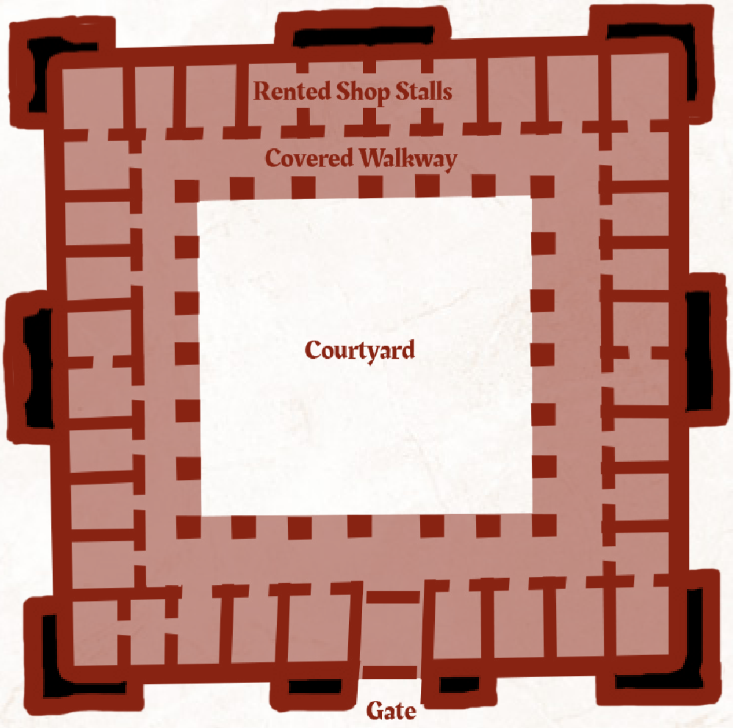
Every trade road, canal, or river enters the City through a gate.

The City Watch guards the gate day and night, with varying effectiveness.

Just inside the gate is a **caravanserai**. This is a ring of apartments made of brick or stone, accessible by a central, enclosed courtyard. Each apartment has two stories: the ground floor for selling merchandise, and the upper floor for private rooms. Traveling merchants rent these apartments for as long as they stay in the City, undergoing customs inspections on-site and selling their wares.

Your caravan or boat crew can rest here—eat, drink, meet new people, and share news. Sometimes, traders hide the choicest merchandise and contraband on the upper floor.

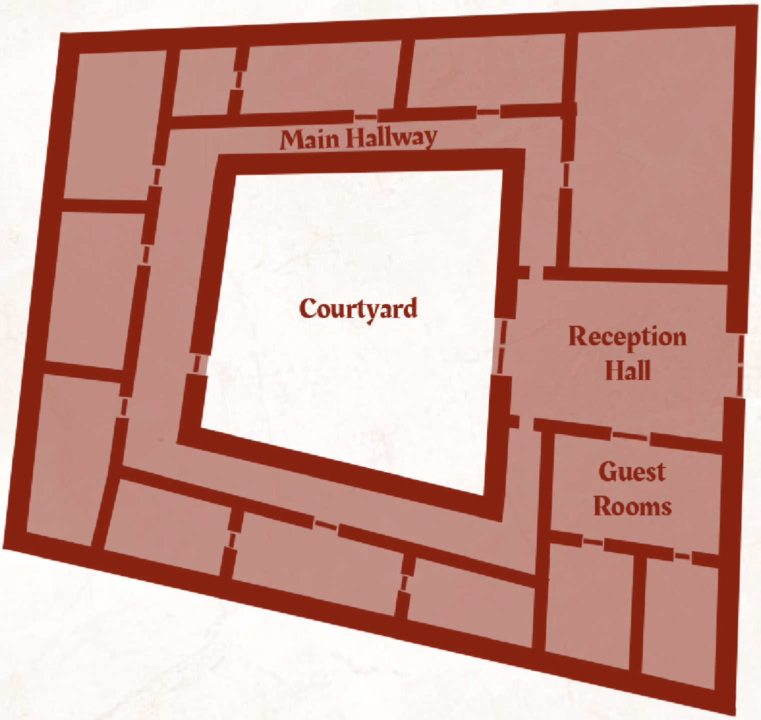
You also find lonely caravanserais on trade routes between Cities, fortified against creatures and bandits. Of course, sometimes you *are* the bandits.



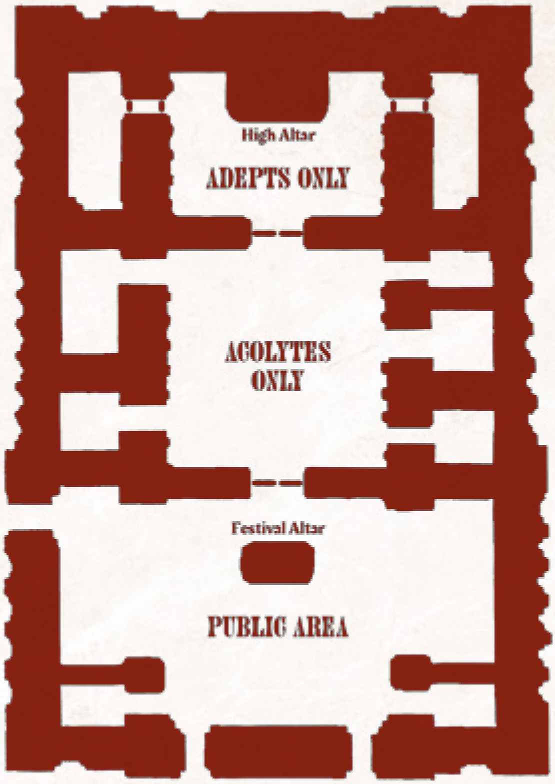
High-Prestige Districts

The most prestigious districts of the City center on the royal palace and the three temples. With the region's typically flat land, the temples and palace raise citizens' eyes artificially with a platform or towering ziggurat. Surrounding each great building are the minor palaces and homes of wealthy and influential people. Temple guards and the City Watch sternly patrol these districts to preserve the City's leaders' wealth, security, and ability to ignore you.

Immediately around the temples, you'll find the wealthiest, most influential adherents to each temple's cult. Some of their palaces are nearly as elaborate as the royal one, if more compact. Each has thick stone walls, several stories of rooms, and an inner courtyard.



Temple



Each **temple** has three main areas: outer precincts open to the general public, gated inner rooms for initiated acolytes, and—locked away farther within—a central suite of rooms reserved for the temple adepts (that is, priests and priestesses).

A statue of the temple's deity stays in the central rooms. On sacred days, the adepts clothe it, bring it out into the public area, and honor the deity with sacrifices.

The temple has its own guards, secret entrances for the adepts' convenience, and sometimes its own burial chambers. Items from the deity's domains festoon the whole place, and the deity's presence lingers heavily on the place.

Sometimes, the temples compete with each other for preëminence in the City. Their fervent acolytes come to blows in the streets, and it makes them all look pretty bad. Rarely, one temple may hold a treasure that is sacred to all their gods. When that happens, steal it before someone else tries.

Once in several generations, a new, young high adept, full of fire, may overturn the traditional rituals, bring in droves of new acolytes, and institute intolerance of all other cults as well as the irreligious.

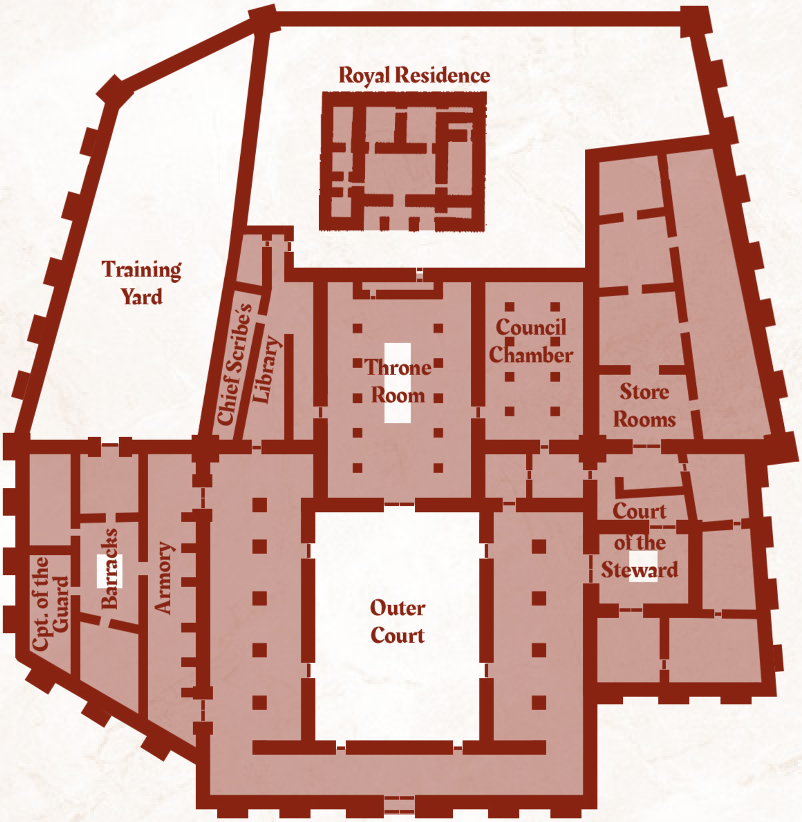
Worse, the gods may start to feud over influence in the City, even resorting to destroying each other's temples. A destroyed temple is a good opportunity for a different cult to claim the site and try to raise money for a new temple there. Supernatural power struggles remake the skyline, but you may also be able to take advantage of them.

Royal Palace

The **royal palace** is a heavily guarded complex of buildings and courtyards. Citizens come to petition the City's rulers in the **throne room**. Further inside, **store rooms** hold collected taxes: grain, wine, salted meat, and coin. Depending how the City is ruled, there may be a **legislative chamber**. Further in are **offices and bedrooms for staff**, including scribes, guards, tax officials, and the executioner. Then, in the **innermost chambers**, richly appointed, the rulers dine, converse, celebrate, and sleep.

The palace guards or City Watch tightly control access to the royal palace, and its layout multiplies the guards' forces with long hallways and dead-end chambers.

When the rulers grow paranoid, they hire informants everywhere, and you never know who in a conversation may report back to the **palace spymaster**. Secret, nighttime arrests become the norm, and dissidents end up in holding cells beneath the palace complex.


Royal Residence
Training Yard
Chief Scribe's Library
Throne Room
Council Chamber
Store Rooms
Court of the Steward
Cpt. of the Guard
Barracks
Armory
Outer Court

Bustling Trade Districts

Between high-prestige districts, artisans ply their trades. You know the main products for your City from your world-building phase. Those who make and sell these products, along with masons, tanners, sculptors, scribes, and others, keep shops and homes here. The City Watch patrols the main square and the market, but they can't see all of it all the time.

Here, much is on offer, but the adventurers are outsiders.

Main Square

This is the vibrant center of urban life, where the City's enfranchised come to see, be seen, and discuss weighty matters of the day.

The palace herald will also come here—flanked by the City Watch—to recite a new official edict from memory. This is how the palace establishes laws, manufactures self-serving history, and declares war on other Cities.

If you violate a law here, flirt with the wrong person, hurt the wrong person, or simply seem out of place, the public will swiftly condemn you.

Market

Galleries of booths and tents either ring the main square or sprawl throughout their own neighborhood. Everything legal from this City and others is for sale here, grouped into orderly sections by type of craft. If you don't have money, the shopkeeper may be open to trade or other compensation.

At Home in the Poor Neighborhoods

Crammed inside the City, in the lowest places, far from the main square, is home for you and your friends. This is the site of safe havens and mutual care. Here, houses made of cheap wood and unfired mud-brick jam up against each other, out of sight and mind of the wealthier districts. A few businesses and common houses anchor blocks and streets, with smaller buildings crowding around them, spiderwebbed with useful alleys.

The City Watch occasionally raids this neighborhood for scapegoats. But their disinterest and prejudice keep them from finding every hiding place.

Good Company

Your neighborhood's most popular venue has lent you a room to rest your heads. It may be upstairs from a coffee house, with the aroma coming through the floorboards. Or it may be in a brothel's unused bedroom, although the flute boys and flute girls have to turn you out when they need it. Wherever it is, people pass in and out in gregarious community—a place to hear news and meet new friends.

Leisure Time

In a local tavern and gambling house, the hostess serves unfiltered beer to the community while people take bets on dice-throwing games and board games. The dice are made of creatures' knuckle bones, and the boards are carved into the tabletops. Play games like Twenty Squares, Hounds and Jackals, or Senet. To exercise, you can wrestle on the stage—unlike the upper classes, you don't have a track to run foot-races or throw javelins.

Black Market

Boothless stalls and password-guarded doors line a tucked-away square at night. Vendors sell what you can't find elsewhere, ready to evaporate at the first sign of the City Watch.

If you know the pass phrase to enter the market, you may hear unsettling news of coming trouble that none dare speak in the main square. You may also see people who don't go out during the day, and find cursed objects for sale.

Streets and Alleys

Most city streets are winding paths of packed dirt, many too narrow even for an ox-cart. However, from the main gate, through the square, continuing to the royal palace and the temples, the City has built wide, raised boulevards paved with flagstones or fired mud-brick. Chariots and wagons run quickly across these roads.

Festival

That wonderful time of year! For most citizens, festival means sacred rituals that reaffirm a shared identity. It's also a time to spend money, drink beer, dance, and indulge in approved or unapproved recreations. The City has the biggest one, lasting a week, and the temples celebrate others. During these times, your neighborhood has its own cherished customs, unique to you. What are they, and why can't you find this anywhere else in the City?

During festivals, new laws and customs replace the usual ones. Those who mistake these times for having *no* laws ruin it for everyone. Are the new laws easier or harder to keep? Which temple asserts more power during this festival? How?

As the festivities begin, you get to mix with more "respectable" citizens in a way that's usually impossible. You might steal valuables and settle old scores, sure, but also catch the eye of someone way above your station and most of all, briefly feel welcome in your own City.

In unlucky years, ordinary citizens catch wind of your neighborhood's celebration, and they pour down your street in search of the "authentic" experience. They're leering, rude, and quick to anger, and they pack the alleys and common houses. The worst of them are just looking for an excuse to riot.

Beyond the City

This is an abundant world. Endless reed marshes, rivers, forests, and savannas all teem with life. They are primeval places.

The animals are often eight to 10 feet high at the shoulder. Their rulers, the **beast princes**, tower even taller, 15 feet high or more.

Reed Marshes

The default environment immediately beyond the City is the marsh: a wet, thriving place that the City can channel into life-giving canals. Rivers divide into distributaries, creating islands. Crocodiles, mushussu, snakes, and other semi-aquatic creatures live and hunt here. Herons, ibis, marsh wolves, and striped hyenas also live in the region. Reeds and grasses taller than your head throng the marsh, hiding creatures' nests and disguising the boundary between solid ground and drowning water.

Rivers

Strong, deep, wide rivers with shallow banks feed the reed marshes. They make perfect routes for connecting Cities and moving cargo efficiently between them in reed boats. Unlike the sea, you cannot lose your way here. In the spring, the rivers overflow their banks and cause havoc. Further upriver, rocky rapids threaten boats, as do sharp bends and fast-moving narrows. Hippopotamus, water buffalo, giant fish, and river serpents live here.

Savanna

Far from the river, wide, dry grasslands roll away. Gazelles, goats, oryx, ostriches, and wild horses—winged and unwinged—graze and run, hunted by lions, leopards, jackals, and sphinxes. Lamassu and rhinoceros tower over them, and elephants and aurochs tower even higher.

Forests

Stands of date palms and tamarisk trees grow near the marsh's brackish waters. Farther upriver, as the elevation rises, you find vast forests of cedar, juniper, oak, pine, and terebinth. These are trackless, unforgiving places where travelers disappear. Bears, boar, foxes, lions, manticores, and wolves all make use of the cover for dens and hunting.

Mountains

Far to the north, the mountains are the mothers of the great rivers that feed and flood the lowlands. Covered in forest on their lower slopes and rising to snow-capped peaks, they become increasingly desolate and inhospitable as you ascend. Ravines, wide aprons of shale, and ice-cold rivers threaten climbers. The mountains' peaks support the heavenly vault: here at the utmost heights, the Pantheon has built its palaces. The great Anqa bird, gryphons, sphinxes, and winged horses make their nests high on the mountains' shoulders. The devastating Bull of Heaven roams the crags, growing in hunger. Bears, leopards, manticores, and wolves live lower down.

Desert

Past the savanna, rocky, "black" desert leads to sandy, "white" desert. Both are dry and barren. Practiced travelers cross the white desert in groups, with bells on their camels and horses, lest they get lost. By day, the sun is scorching; at night, a deep chill sets in. Deserts are home to the hardiest creatures: ghouls, locusts, rock mice, scorpions, scorpion-people, and snakes large and small. Some nest in caves, where vital moisture collects overnight.

Sea

The sea is teeming with fish, dolphins, gigantic sharks, whales, and the Leviathan of the utmost deep. On the high sea, out of sight of land, the storm and sea gods toss ships between them like coins.

Atlantean Ruins

There are so few ruins of Atlantis, and each is so singular that we hate to generalize. The ruins lurk here and there in lonely places. Their fine architecture includes lacy arches, elegant pillars, soaring ceilings, walls of stained glass, and enormous domes. Though devastated, they still hold an eerie, delicate beauty. They built palaces that only a peaceful land, fearless of doom, could conceive.

Atlantean building materials include:

- Delicately worked brass and bronze, now overgrown with verdigris
- Gold, which never tarnishes, still uncannily bright after æons
- Enormous sheets of colored glass, now shattered
- Fine stone: pure, white marble; pure, black onyx; fiery, red carnelian, crushed into gravel

Signs of the Pantheon's judgment are everywhere: The ruins are flooded, burned, collapsed, or overgrown. The impossibly thin domes are cracked like eggshells.

These are elegiac places that belong to an earlier age. They are a testament to the dangers of pride and the promise of desire.

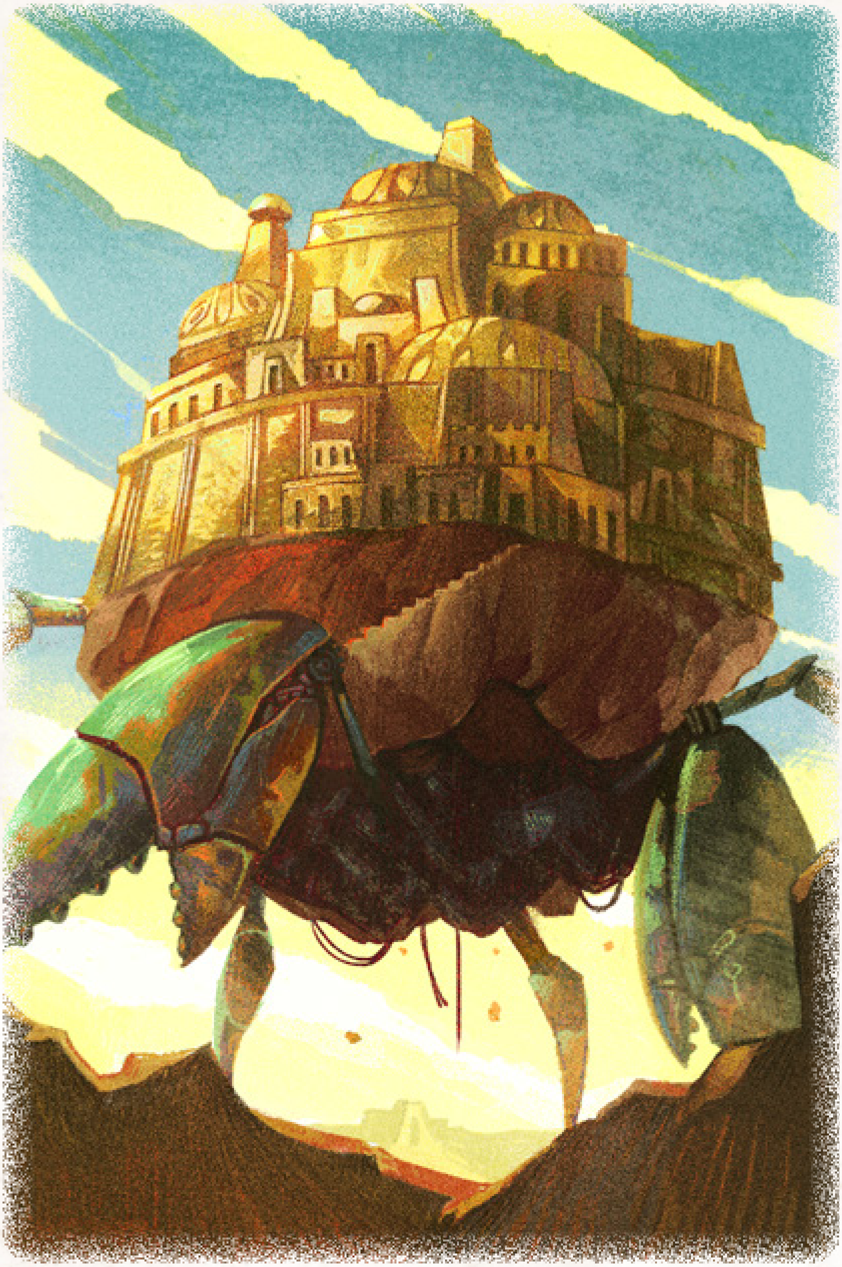
Where People Have Found Them

Below the sea. The gods drowned many cities, but sorcery keeps some of them dry in vast bubbles of air. Sometimes, sorcery erupts to the surface, creating whirlpools that draw ships in. A few ships even reach the undersea docks in one piece.

In the marshes. Some ruins stand beyond dense thickets of reeds, where the marsh sinks deeper, and only the upper levels of a building are visible. Glowing lights flicker deep within their half-collapsed archways, promising a meeting with the dead.

In the forest. If you get lost enough, you may find an unnaturally sharp-edged clearing. Seemingly perfect white marble is marred by scorched, blackened craters, signs of the gods' thunderbolts. Some doors lead to life; others only to darkness.

Beneath a human City. When diving into a storm drain, or when the earth opens up after a mudslide or quake, some people find the vaulted roofs of other, much older buildings. The uncanny hills on which that City's temples stand are propped up by the tallest, most intact Atlantean City's towers. Some destitute people even live in these underground citadels, out of reach of landlords. Then they come back changed—sometimes in enviable ways.



In the mountains. Looking up at a far, sharp-toothed black peak streaked with white snow, you may spy flashes of pink. Locals in the foothills refuse to speak of them. They are grand, sundered façades of carnelian, coral, tourmaline, garnet, and ruby, separated from each other by dozens of feet of elevation. Each one is fronted by the same amethyst docks, suggesting they once all stood together at sea level. During the destruction, the gods sent the mountains shooting up violently, shearing the place apart while dragging it skyward.

In a cave. Not far from here, a hauntingly familiar melody floats out of a small cave. Follow it down a natural passage to an uncannily misplaced doorway, made of expertly cut and joined stones, different from that of the tunnel's living rock. In truth, it is a balcony on a tower's topmost landing, and its stairs descend deep below. The earth swallowed up a fortress that once touched the sky. Only the strength of its construction prevented it from being crushed completely—and in places, it failed.

On a floating island. Hidden by a persistent cloud bank far out to sea or in a secluded valley is an impossible island in the sky. It is dome-shaped like a gentle hill, covered in green, and its rocky root tapers to a single point. Water cascades from one side to the ground far below. You can just see scattered buildings of many colors dotting the island's grassy sides. A piece from the island's shore has fallen to the ground, providing you with an unlikely means to ascend.

Not far, but only on a certain day. On the longest day of the year, in an intersection of alleys in one of the City's poor neighborhoods, a doorway appears. It is freestanding—a hollow pair of posts and a lintel. When viewed from one side, you can see a labyrinth of rooms, corridors, and staircases extending into far darkness. An old woman you know told you the gate would appear. She infects her neighbors with her own vicarious hopes.

Walking on metal legs. Striding across a muddy plain far from here, an Atlantean citadel still tries to outrun the Pantheon's judgment. Six titanic, jointed, bronze crab-legs bear a fortress twenty feet above the ground. Its pace never slackens, but it will sometimes abruptly change direction for its own opaque reasons.

CHAPTER

Creatures and Enemies

by Sean D'souza and Chrys Sellers

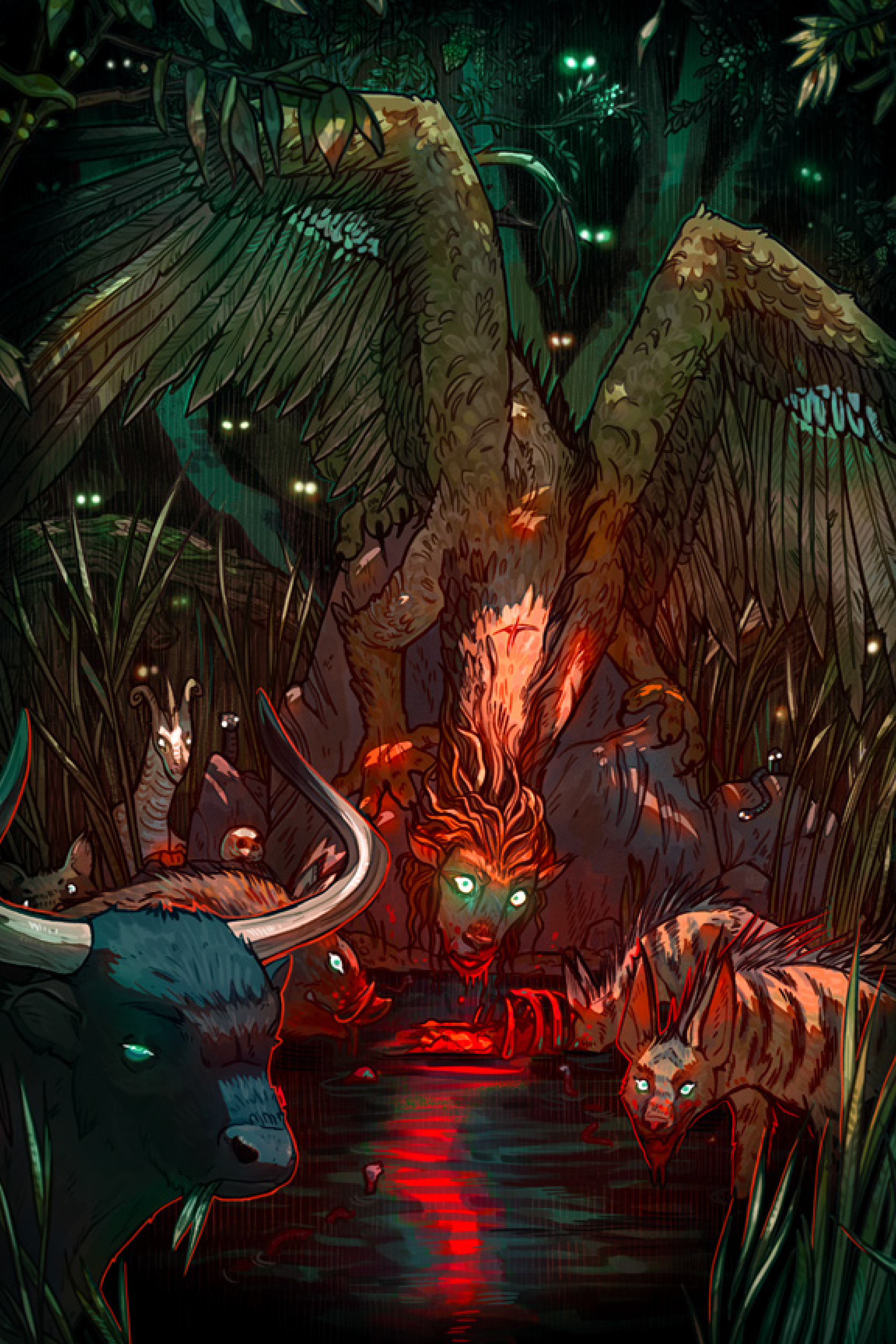
Below is a list of side characters who might appear in an adventure. Although some are minor, any 0-Epithet or 1-Epithet enemy may become more significant to the story if a player focuses on them. For that reason, potential additional Epithets are suggested.

0 Epithets

City Watch

Minions of the City, enforcers of its laws. They may be in it to hurt others, out of belief in the City's dubious ideals, for the money, or because they don't realize they can do anything else. In an iniquitous regime, signing up to enforce it may be the only way to benefit. Many are spiritually timid, more subject to the laws than any of the adventurers. The law has given them a sword, a spear, and a cap helmet, and they cling to them for life itself.

Unless taken unawares at a guard post or on patrol, the City Watch attacks the adventurers in squads of three to five. If the alarm has sounded, they may attack in two or three squads at once. They use



basic tactics of encirclement and seeking the high ground. When in multiple squads, a few Watchers will hang back, ready to run off and seek reinforcements should things go badly.

While each individual is scared for their own skin, they have a duty to alert their superiors if the City, its temples, or its other institutions are under threat.

When a player **Entices** a guard, it turns them suddenly from an anonymous minion into an individual. They are tempting the normally sensible guard to be foolish, potentially even giving up their economic and legal security.

If a City Guard becomes a more significant side character, you can give them the Epithet "who is driven by necessity," "who must not lose what little they have," or "who sees the enemies they are trained to see."

Hyena, striped

Striped hyenas have a distinctly long mane on their backs and big, pointed ears on their head. Their front legs are much longer than their hind legs, making them look like they limp when they walk. However, don't be fooled—they are agile creatures, walking and running with ease, moving in a zigzag pattern. This helps them evade larger predators. They have a thick muzzle with a strong jaw and huge teeth that can crush bone, hooves and even horns. Their muzzle, ears, and throat are entirely black with their coats coloured in shades of golden yellow, brown or gray, with black stripes on their body and legs.

Striped hyenas are stealthy and can easily camouflage in tall grass. They are mostly solitary creatures, rarely traveling in groups. An acrid smell warns you when you have entered their territory. A striped hyena's keen eyes, sense of smell, and sharp hearing are extremely effective when scavenging and hunting by night.

Striped hyenas are predominantly scavengers, but they are also skilled hunters. They like to eat carrion that other predators leave behind. However, they will also hunt horses, donkeys, goats and sheep. They love stealing dates, melons, cucumbers, and peaches from human settlements.

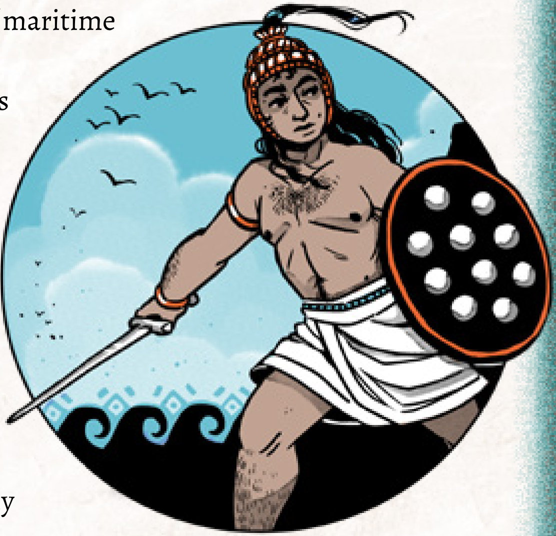
Some say striped hyenas are grave robbers, or that they will steal children in the dead of the night. Those who dare befriend them may seek them out as a reliable hunting companion. Their powerful senses are useful for tracking and warning when other more dangerous creatures are around.

Adventurers may offer a lonesome hyena food. The hyena will then follow them at a safe distance, until the hyena is sure the adventurers will provide for it regularly, at which point it will join their "pack" and travel with them.

A striped hyena can become a 1-Epithet creature if it joins the adventurers. You may give them an Epithet like "who guards the pack with tooth and claw" or "who warns the pack of danger."

Pirates

Rowers and reavers on a crew of maritime raiders. Pirates are anarchic free spirits, but when the adventurers meet one, it is usually in the thick of a naval battle. In that mode, a pirate is a frenzied marauder who attacks with abandon, rarely guarding their own life. They know that every pirate ship is one raid away from starvation, and that their fellow pirates will judge their bravery. All must fight if any will succeed.



Pirates are the fabled Sea People, who bend the wind and waves to their whim and strike without mercy. They pillage proud cities and disappear. They attack in narrow, fast-moving war galleys with two or three banks of oars and no mast stepped. They know the sea god's secrets— arcane sailing wisdom. When they spy a civilian ship coming along their coast, they rush out from a hidden cove to overtake them, firing arrows, latching on with hooks and ropes, boarding and taking everything.

When a player **Entices** a Pirate, they may appeal to the Pirate's lust for adventure and fear of scarcity.

If a Pirate becomes a 1-Epithet individual, you may give them an Epithet like "who lusts for booty" or "who fights with the frenzy of necessity."

Skeletons

Animated skeletons are the product of a necromancer's spell. They are driven single-mindedly by the engraved memories of their final living moments. If they died in battle, they are relentless fighters. If they died of plague, they feel endless physical need. If they died of old age, they are somnolent, stumbling creatures.

This makes the spell-caster's choice of location important. A cunning necromancer draws skeletons from battlefields, where the swords and shields of their old war remain close to hand. They knife their way out of the dirt and pursue, with single-minded intensity, the necromancer's stated target. They gather whatever tools their memory demands.

Skeletons feel no fear nor sense of self-preservation. This makes them bold but also thoughtless for their safety. They will step blithely into open pits or the swords of superior numbers.

Skeletons' bones hang together through the necromancer's sorcerous will. A mighty blow can break them apart temporarily, but they will always seek to knit themselves back together—even when shattered to splinters. The only way to stop them permanently is to undo the necromancer's spell. This makes them especially dangerous when the necromancer has written the spell in baked clay or otherwise engraved it, such that the spell can outlive its caster.

It is hard but not impossible to **Entice** a skeleton. Each was a person once. Require the player to discover and make a strong appeal to the skeleton's former humanity before letting them even attempt the move. To **Entice** the skeleton, they may have to offer them a token of memory of their past life, allowing the skeleton to crumble and rest.

If a skeleton becomes an individual enemy somehow, give them the Epithet "whose one last memory burns in them" or "who serves their summoner ceaselessly."

1 Epithet

Acolyte

An initiate in their temple who serves as a loyal attendant. They trust the officiants—the adepts—and do whatever they ask. The acolyte is also a person of some prestige in the City, who proudly performs their piety where all can see it.

They know some of their cult's secrets, and they attend the temple annually to perform sacred rites—the "mysteries." These grant the acolyte a small but palpable blessing from the deity.

An acolyte bears a talisman of their deity, perhaps as an amulet on a necklace or a charm tucked into their belt. When serving in the temple, or on the way to or from it, they wear the robes of temple service.

They see the adventurers as unwashed nobodies who lack their deity's favor. If they feel the adventurers pose a threat to their temple, they will defend it if necessary, or escape to warn their temple superiors if they can.

An acolyte enjoys feeling pious, hobnobbing with the powerful, taking part in restricted rites in the private part of the temple, and gaining their deity's favor. When a player **Entices** them, they have many levers to pull.

Give the acolyte the Epithet "who secures their prestige with piety."

City Official

One who enacts the City's laws and guards its official customs. They may be a judge, chamberlain, tax collector, senator, or palace courtier. They are one of hundreds of people who write laws, mill unfortunates through the punitive legal system, fill the City's coffers, and keep the palace running smoothly.

The laws do not bind them but grant them license. They know thousands of ways to work the system to their advantage. They can wriggle through legal loopholes. They know the law is how one separates the privileged from everyone else; since they are among the privileged, this is merely the system working as it should.

They bear many signs of privilege: a civic amulet as a badge of office, and a dyed woolen stole that only City officials may wear—red for senators, gold for tax collectors, blue for palace officials. They keep their hair, skin, and fingernails oiled, and their clothes clean. Everything about them signals: they belong.

Give the City Official the Epithet "who uses their privilege as a weapon." If they need another Epithet, consider "face and hand of the City's laws."

Palace Guard

A lone guard protects a special place: the holy of holies in a temple, the bedroom of an aristocrat, or the palace's throne room. They typically have a large spear or sword. If necessary, they can summon the City Watch for reinforcements.

This is a loyal, motivated, disciplined person. They are usually physically gifted in massive size, agility, or both. They take pride in their job. They know they're the last line of defense for whoever their charge is. For them, it's personal.

Give them the Epithet "who takes pride in fulfilling their duty." If additional Epithets seem appropriate, give them "who stands in the gap" or "who loves their charge unconditionally."

Sphinx, lesser

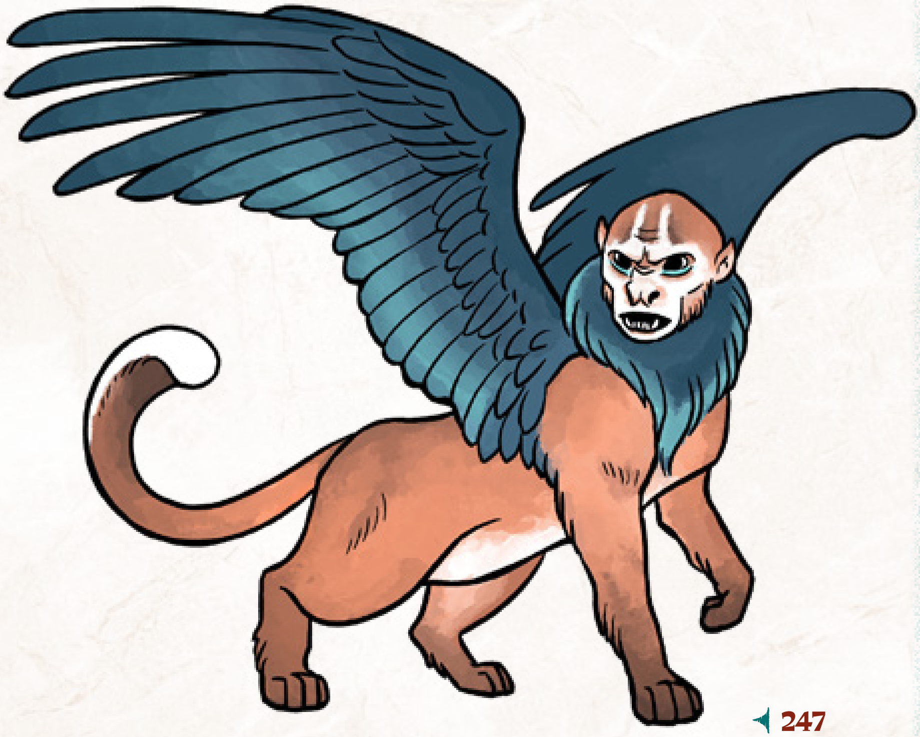
Unlike their greater cousins, a lesser sphinx is about the size of a lynx, with a lynx or bobcat's body. Its wings are the size of a vulture's, and it has a monkey's face. Like the greater sphinx, a lesser sphinx absorbs the intelligence of its prey, but their size mostly limits them to eating smaller animals like badgers, meerkats, lizards and birds. They are capable of language and occasionally show a human's wit, demonstrating their danger to larger beings. When they do speak, it is always in cryptic riddles. They can't tell lies, though they can choose not to answer. Their own mental capabilities are directly proportionate to the intelligence they have absorbed.

Lesser sphinxes are more social than their cousins, sometimes hunting in packs or "libraries" of 4-5 sphinxes. The most intelligent of the library will lead the hunt. It is their responsibility to plan, strategize and organize the others. Libraries make their dens in mountain tunnels or deep within forests. They wait for lost travellers to stumble into their territory.

Lesser sphinxes love games. They exert their dominance in their library through riddles and games of wit. When they come across an adventurer, they will engage in such games to test their intelligence. If the lesser sphinx wins, the rest of the library will attack. If the adventurers should win, the sphinx will consider them equals and show them a safe path.

While lesser sphinxes are incapable of sorcery, they are fond of it. If they should catch wind of a sorcerer, they will focus their attention on them in hopes of witnessing their power. A more ambitious lesser sphinx may even try to absorb a sorcerer's intelligence, hoping to gain their abilities.

Give the lesser sphinx the Epithet "who speaks cryptic truths." A lesser sphinx can become a 2-Epithet creature if it absorbs the intelligence of several sentient creatures. When this happens, give it an Epithet like "whose curiosity is untamed" or "who hungers for knowledge."



Zealot

An initiate in a temple and favorite of its deity. They believe they speak for the immortal, and they exact its will without mercy or proportion. They see how the adventurers fail to fit into the immortal's vision of the world, calling out these supposed insufficiencies so all can hear.

In a more subtle mode, they make driven assassins and spies. They will kill themselves before allowing the adventurers to capture them. They do have moments of simple human emotions, loving life and simple pleasures, feeling joy, mercy, sorrow, and grief. However, when backed into a corner, their conditioning overtakes them, driving them into a frenzy and absenting their soul. Then they will sacrifice anything, everything, to accomplish what they think is their deity's will.

The Zealot bears a talisman of their deity, perhaps as an amulet on a necklace, a charm tucked into their belt, or a tattoo. They bear a weapon sacred to the immortal they serve.

Give them the Epithet "who remorselessly enacts their deity's will." If you need an additional Epithet, give them "who sacrifices human love on their deity's altar."

2 Epithets

Ghoul

A humanoid, carnivorous scavenger who prowls caves, graveyards, the desert, and lonely places. They are solitary creatures when not mating. Although they have claws and sharp teeth, they are not strong compared to hyenas or other scavengers. This makes them cautious and likely to hunt by guile. They mostly eat carrion; when attacking live prey, they prefer those who are weak, sick, isolated, or close to dying. They will attack healthier targets if hungry enough, and they are often hungry, going for long stretches without eating. When the adventurers encounter them, it is either after becoming separated or blundering into the ghoul's lair.

Ghouls have shapeshifting camouflage that lets them appear human and even make light conversation. They use this ability to lure their prey away from others, get their guard down, then surprise them with a shocking transformation to their true shape. This is when they reveal their coarse bristles, claws, legs like a dog's, faces like a large cat's, and split tongues.

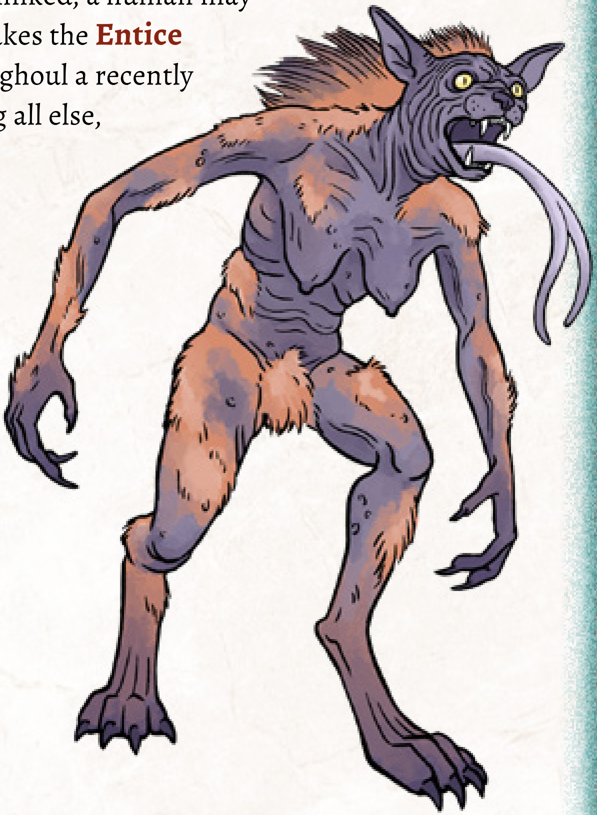
Ghouls prefer enclosed or semi-enclosed dens, making lairs in caves, dry riverbeds, and unearthed graves (which double as a source of food). They do not feel cold or heat, they can go a long time without drinking, and they do not sleep. They are patient.

In combat, they can climb sheer surfaces with their strong claws, and they are deathly quiet when hunting. When closing for an attack, they sometimes make soft purring or growling noises.

During mating season, ghouls congregate where carrion is plenty, including graveyards and battlefields. Ghoulish mating is a bloody, biting affair that can prove fatal. Because of how closely the mating and prey drives are linked, a human may court a ghoul. If a player makes the **Entice** move, they should offer the ghoul a recently deceased creature or, failing all else, a bite from the adventurer's own flesh.

One dead human, whole, can sustain a ghoul for a month. Then the habitual hunger returns.

Give a ghoul 2 Epithets: "who hides their intentions" and "who does horrible things for hunger."



Temple Adept

A priest or priestess in a City temple. They have access to the temple's innermost sanctum, the holy of holies. They live in the private precincts of the temple, supported by public offerings. When someone sacrifices a bull or goat, they butcher it, burn the fat and a few choice cuts on their deity's altar, then eat the rest. When someone donates coins, they spend some of it on robes for their deity's statue, then spend the rest on themselves.

They know their cult's advanced secrets and rites—the "mysteries." They perform them annually and at other significant times of the year. When they honor the deity, the deity blesses them with health and power. They can call down immortal power when they need to, either transforming themself, summoning a divine creature, or even calling forth the deity.

The adept bears a talisman of their deity, perhaps as an amulet on a necklace, a charm tucked into their belt, or a tattoo. It is more elaborate than those of mere acolytes, and their washed and perfumed robes show their prestige.

Give an adept 2 Epithets: "who serves as their deity's hand" and "who leads the temple's cult."

Sorcerous Creature

In and around Atlantean ruins, sorcerous power leaks into the world. Here, unknown life may spontaneously arise, or existing creatures may transform into something new. They are not directed by Atlantean designs, but free mutants.

These creatures take many forms: silvery, five-legged stalkers; howling mouths with seven wings; tentacular sirens; panthers made sinuous, rippling, and sometimes invisible.

A Sorcerous Creature may eat plants or animals, or they may suck life force directly from the world around them.

They are eternally alone, with no pack or family. Even other Sorcerous Creatures from the same ruin are likely to be strangers to them. They are not adapted to any habitat. They think in their own language. They are so new that they do not understand the world or themself.

When a player **Entices** a Sorcerous Creature, the main obstacle is connecting with someone who feels so alone. They do not even know the language of the creatures around them.

The 2 Epithets you give to a Sorcerous Creature may depend on their abilities. We suggest "who seeks to live" and "who treats all as strangers."

3 Epithets

Atlantean Guardian

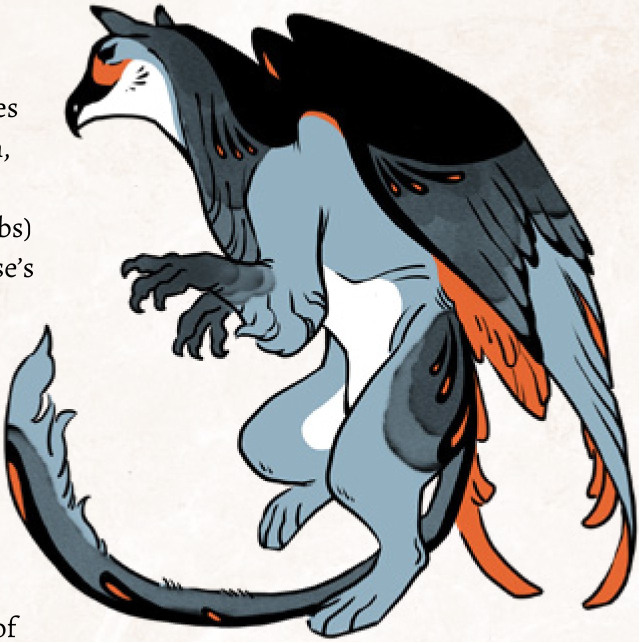
The power of the Atlanteans echo in the ruins of what was once a grand civilization. They created many wondrous artifacts to serve their needs. Some of these they imbued with sorcerous life, giving them a will and purpose; creations like the bronze and brass guardians scattered around their cities.

Atlantean guardians are sculpted in humanoid shape with the heads of beasts or birds. The Atlanteans would station these constructs in and around the city with orders to protect a place, person or object. Most of these have been destroyed or stripped of their power. A rare few still spark with sorcery, carrying out the orders given them æons ago.

Atlantean guardians bear shields, spears, and daggers. They can detect life forms anywhere within their assigned domain of protection. They stand still, lying dormant until anyone trespasses into that domain or performs a specific transgression that awakens them, like taking an object, opening a sarcophagus, or breaking into a room. Once activated, guardians will attack trespassers until they are dead, until they leave the area, or until the guardian itself is destroyed. They are not sentient creatures and will not fall to persuasion. They will only carry out the command they were given to the very end.

Give the Atlantean guardian 3 Epithets: "who is one with their environment," "who only knows the clash of battle," and "who guards ancient secrets."

Gryphon



Gryphons are creatures with the body of a lion, the head, wings, and talons (on the forelimbs) of an eagle, and a horse's keen ears. They are intelligent and extremely loyal creatures with sharp senses, deadly strength and a strong affinity for magical items. They have a tiny fragment of divine power that lets their eyes sense sorcerous auras around items and creatures. Gryphons are territorial and guard their nests zealously. Within their nests are valuable magical treasures picked off unwary travelers.

Gryphons make their nests on cliff faces overlooking forests or seas where they hunt. They hunt prey like wild buffalo, boar, large fish, and small horses. They grab their prey with their claws and carry them high up in the air before dropping them. They then feed on the dead animal, rending flesh with their beaks and claws.

Gryphons sometimes attack ships or caravans traversing through their territory to steal magical items from them to add to their collections. They scour the seas after storms in the hope of finding shipwrecks to ransack. A gryphon's treasure isn't a large hoard. It is a collection of objects (mostly magical in nature) the gryphon finds interesting or powerful.

> Adventurers who are seeking individuals with sorcerous items might find their corpse on a rocky beach or hanging from a tree, only to discover the item has been stolen by a gryphon.

Gryphons are solitary creatures when not in mating season. Once every 5 years, a female gryphon lays 2-3 eggs, which it keeps warm in its nest. The eggs hatch in about a month. The hatchlings then stay with the mother for a year after which they are pushed out of the nest to survive on their own.

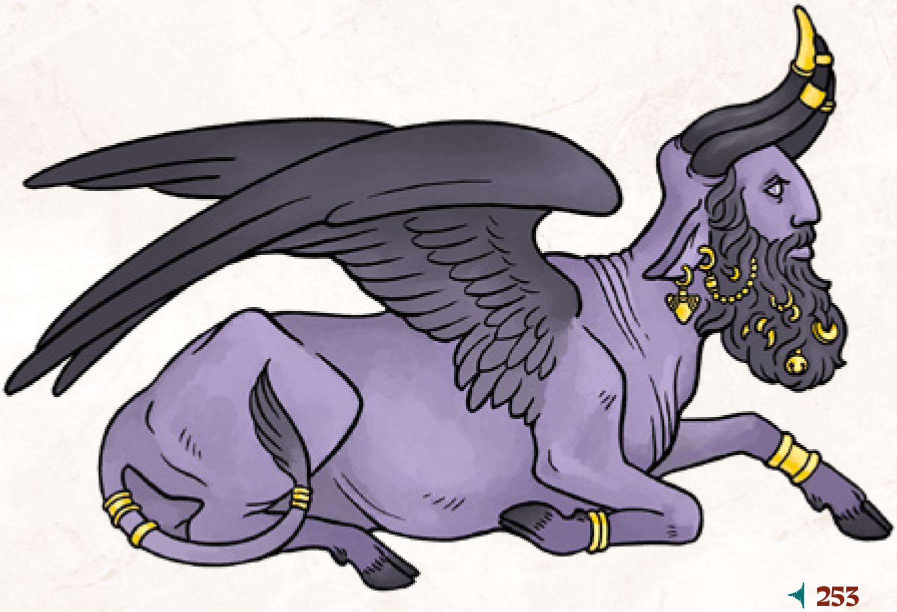
Some gods have bent the gryphons' desire for treasure to their advantage. These gods charge gryphons to guard their immortal property, sacred places and precious objects. Gryphons fulfill their charge loyally and viciously hunt anyone who betrays them.

Adventurers may try to win favour with a gryphon by offering it a magical item or helping a gryphon in need. If this should happen the gryphon will drop a feather for the adventurers. They must break the feather to call on the gryphon. At once, the gryphon will sense the divine power in the feather and immediately start making their way to aid the adventurers.

Give the gryphon 3 Epithets: "who sees all things magical," "who is a ferocious guardian," and "who is loyal to a fault."

Lamassu

Lamassu are celestial creatures who once guarded the gates to the heavens. Having won their freedom from the gods long ago, they now inhabit the land, making homes in mountain caverns and offering knowledge to travellers in exchange for precious treasures.



Lamassu are shaped like winged bulls with a human head and bovine ears. They have four horns - two on each side of their heads, curving forward from the back of their skulls. They stand over sixteen feet tall at the shoulder and can live for hundreds of years. Both male and female lamassu have long beards and proud chests akin to royalty. They flaunt beards and ears embellished with jewelry and other trinkets adorned by those who cross their paths. It is their greatest offering of trust. The oldest of the lamassu were bequeathed crowns when they exited the heavens, which they wear proudly as a symbol of their freedom and independence.

Lamassu eat plants and berries that grow in the mountains where they live. They are selectively social and bond for life. If you encounter one, it is likely another is in the vicinity. Lamassu are not inherently malicious creatures. They are honorable and proud but won't refrain from maiming or killing if treated with dishonor. Their powerful kicks can easily break a human's ribs, and their horns can gore their enemies.

Lamassu's celestial powers allow them to see the threads connecting a soul to the rest of the world. These threads do not grant them prophetic knowledge, but they show lamassu the potential paths laid before a soul. Lamassu may trade this knowledge for a precious belonging or creation. The lamassu will then listen to the story behind the item and decide if it is worth the trade.

> The traded object must be significant to the owner, like a powerful sword, a piece of jewelry that belonged to a loved one, or even an adventurer's map.

Give the lamassu 3 Epithets: "who hoards trinkets of the heart", "who illuminates the path ahead" and "who breaks the dishonorable."

Lion

Lions have powerful feline bodies, with jaws that can snap a deer's neck and claws that can easily tear through flesh. The males are fierce fighters and defenders of the pride, with long manes that warn other predators away. The females are lithe and strong hunters.

Lions have complex social structures with strong familial bonds. They live in prides of 3–4 males and around a dozen lionesses and cubs. Younger males will usually leave the pride once they are 2–3 years old to attempt to take over another male's pride and gain breeding rights.

Sometimes a group of males will form a coalition to attack and take over the pride of another stronger male. The lions in these coalitions are usually related—brothers, cousins, uncles, and fathers.

Lionesses hunt in groups. They use stealth, coordination and powerful bursts of speed to take down their prey. They tend to use a pincer formation, splitting into two groups and circling their target before closing in from both sides. Whichever group is closest will charge the target, driving it into the claws of the others. They mainly prey on deer, wildebeests and warthogs.

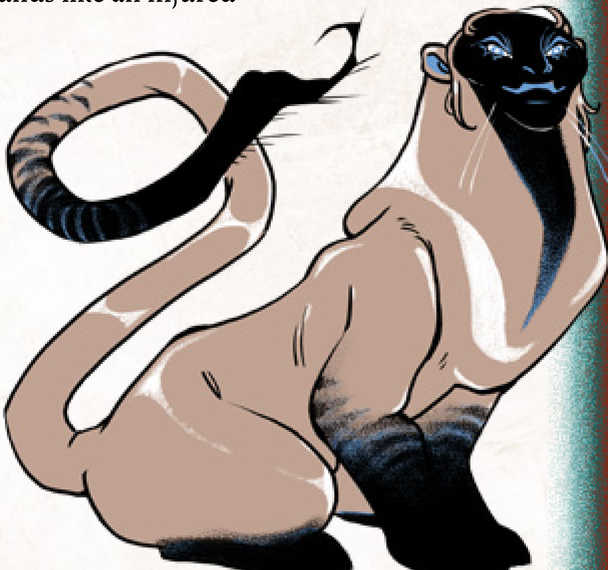
Lions are majestic creatures. Humans revere them for their strength and grace and fear them for the terror they inspire. They symbolize the ferocity and nobility of the natural world. Royalty will often set out to hunt lions as a show of their own dominion over the land.

Give the lion 3 Epithets: "who inspires terror," and "who denies escape," and "who protects their pride."

Manticore

A manticore has a human's face, lion's body, and scorpion's sting. These man-eating creatures are driven by instinct. They are natural predators who enjoy the hunt. While they primarily feed on humans, they are also known to hunt smaller prey when necessary.

Manticores make their home in forests and grasslands, where they can easily hide among the brush. They can't speak or understand any language, but their cry sounds like an injured human calling for help. They can even throw their voice, leading adventurers into an ambush. Once in sight, they will shoot their prey with a poisonous spine from their stinger. This poison slows the target down and works its way into their skeletal structure, softening the bone and killing the nerves.



The manticore then chases its prey, toying with it until it finally pounces for the kill. Manticores leave no trace of their prey, devouring everything, even the bones.

> Adventurers can see signs of a manticore on trees or rocks where it sharpens its claws or leaves behind spines that missed a fleeing target.

Manticores procreate by transforming other humans. Their body's reproductive cycle is based on the seasons. In winter, a manticore's poison will not kill a human. A poisoned human will instead transform over the span of a month. Through this metamorphosis, they lose their sense of self and transform into a manticore, keeping only the face they once had.

Humans undergoing a transformation are called *cubs*. Throughout the transformation, they lie screaming and sweating. The changes come in waves that exhaust the cub. In between these waves of transformations, the cub is plagued with fear. They contemplate hiding the parts of them that have transformed and may even seek death. Sleep always comes uneasy.

> If an adventurer should be poisoned and begin to change, they can seek out powerful sorcerers, who may be able to reverse the effect if they can treat the adventurer before the transformation is complete. However, this reversal is imperfect, and the adventurer will still retain some aspects of a manticore.

Manticores seek one or more other manticores to help protect a cub during the transformation period. One stays with the cub while the others hunt for food. Once the transformation is complete, they all go their separate ways.

Give the manticore 3 Epithets: "who hungers for human flesh," "who plays with their food," and "whose sting can pierce bone."

Mushussu

The mushussu is a reptilian beast with a serpentine body, lion-like forelegs, taloned hind legs and powerful tail. It stands over seven feet tall at the withers and can grow up to 18 feet from snout to tail. Its glassy scales create a ripple-like effect when it moves, which helps it camouflage in water. Mushussu are native to marshy wetlands and rivers. They are expert swimmers and can hold their breath at length (some believe over an hour). Mushussu make their nests in air pockets in underwater caverns.

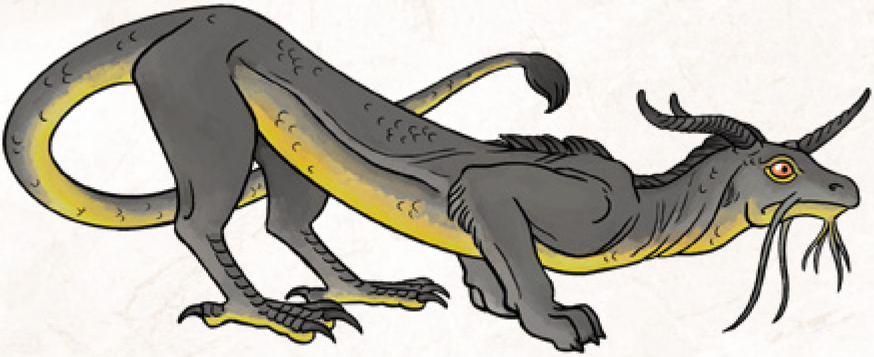
Mushussu live a solitary life, interacting with others of their kind only to mate. They mate once every few decades and can live up to 150 years. They lay eggs buried in the riverbed close to their nests, where they hatch after a year.

Mushussu hunt by hiding in the reeds or ambushing their targets from within the water. Once within reach, the mushussu will pounce on its prey and go in for the kill. They grip and claw their prey down with their forelegs, using their body to wrap around and constrict it until it drowns or bleeds out. They then use their talons to disembowel the carcass, feasting on the entrails which they find particularly delicious. They mainly feed on crocodiles, hippopotami, water buffalo, and other aquatic and semi aquatic animals.

Some believe that the presence of a mushussu in the area is a sign of the gods' favor as they keep a check on other natural predators that would otherwise prey on humans. It is this misconception that has driven rulers to send parties to find, capture and tame a mushussu. The truth is that mushussu care little for humans and rarely go out of their way to hunt them. But if provoked, they will fight any incursion into their habitat.

Mushussu are persistent hunters. Once they catch wind of their prey, they will not retreat until it is dead.

Give the mushussu 3 Epithets: "whose scales run like water and steel," "whose claws crush intruders," and "who hunts tenaciously."



Necromancer

Necromancy takes years of dedicated studying, an open mind, and a curiosity about the link between life and death. Studying such sorcery takes a toll on the mind, body, and soul of the student. Without proper supervision, one can be driven mad, suffer severe injuries, face life-threatening consequences, or endure a mortified life worse than death. As a result, true necromancers are rare.

The study of necromancy is forbidden in most cities. The temples deem it sacrilegious, because bringing the dead back to life breaks the order of life and death. The *gidim* or ghosts have savored the beauty of the world in their life; in death, it is their duty to serve the god of the Underworld. Any act that steals them away from these duties agitates both the spirits and the gods. It is a punishable offence.

So, those who desperately require the help of a necromancer bravely seek these sorcerers outside the constraints of the law. Others pursue the necromantic arts themselves, unsupervised, or apprentice under more learned practitioners. Some pursue the art out of a frantic need to speak with or resurrect a loved one, while others seek to sate their hunger for godlike power.

When they learn of the cost the sorcery demands, many give up. Of those who push beyond their limits, the ones who die are considered lucky. However, the few who survive with their minds intact discover secrets of life and death.

They can commune with the dead. They can also summon and tether *gidim* to their corpses or bones, binding them in service. These undead work tirelessly, without the need for rest or food.

Players may encounter these skeletons in small numbers, guarding the routes to a necromancer's lair. Rarely, they may stumble upon armies of undead in a hidden city, building strange contraptions to serve their necromantic ruler's schemes.

Some necromancers can even extend their own life indefinitely. They collect the souls of their victims in a vial or talisman that they keep on their person. Every few years, they release one of these souls into the Underworld, to take their place instead and maintain the balance of life and death. Such necromancers have mastered the art of bargaining with the god of the Underworld, sometimes carrying out the god's requests, but always in support of their own machinations.

You can recognize necromancers by their staff, which is fitted with a "skull of whispers" (the skull of a human or large animal) that anchors summoned spirits to the mortal realm. The necromancer transfers a fragment of their own soul into this skull to weight the anchor. This turns the skull into a sentient jailer of souls, allowing the necromancer to focus on other things. Necromancers also keep bones and other paraphernalia of dead creatures and humans on their person, which serve as components for their sorcery.

> Destroying the skull of whispers releases the souls from the necromancer's control, allowing them to run wild until returned to the Underworld.

Give the necromancer 3 Epithets: "who challenges death," "who never forgets what they've lost," and "who hungers for knowledge."

Pirate Captain

Pirates are roving marauders of the sea. Their life is shaped by two things: freedom and survival. They are master sailors and cunning rulers of the sea. As people who live and die on the sea, they understand the weather, currents and workings of seafaring vessels better than most. They target merchant ships for their food, weapons, and precious stones and metals. They take what they want and leave what remains to sink to the seafloor and the horrors waiting at its depths.

Pirates are adept at sea skirmishes. They come out of the fog and attack before their targets can prepare to fight back. They board their target ship and raid it, killing anyone who gets in their way. They then commandeer the ship or burn it, leaving any survivors to the whims of the sea.

The pirate captain is the leader of the ship. Theirs is the final say on any important decisions regarding the ship and its crew. They are an expert navigator and usually the best swordsman on the ship. On the ship, their word is law and every crew member is expected to follow them unquestioningly. Conversely, the captain is expected to plan and strategize ambushes and raids to ensure large loot and the crew's safety. They must command fear and trust and live up to the expectations of the crew. Failing to do so may cause a mutiny.

There is no honour in piracy. Only freedom. The captain knows this. They will use any tricks, lies and treachery to make sure that they and their crew come out on top. In the extremely rare occasion that they are outclassed, they know to sail away.

A larger pirate crew with multiple ships can be considered a fleet. In such a case, each ship has its own captain, and the captain of the largest ship is considered the pirate captain of the entire fleet. Fleets and multiple pirate crews all live on a large lawless island that they have claimed for themselves. It has only one rule: no fighting between crews. While some crews fight each other, they usually keep it away from the island where they dock. Fights between crews can be settled by a duel to the death between the captains, after which the losing crew accedes to the crew of the winning pirate captain.

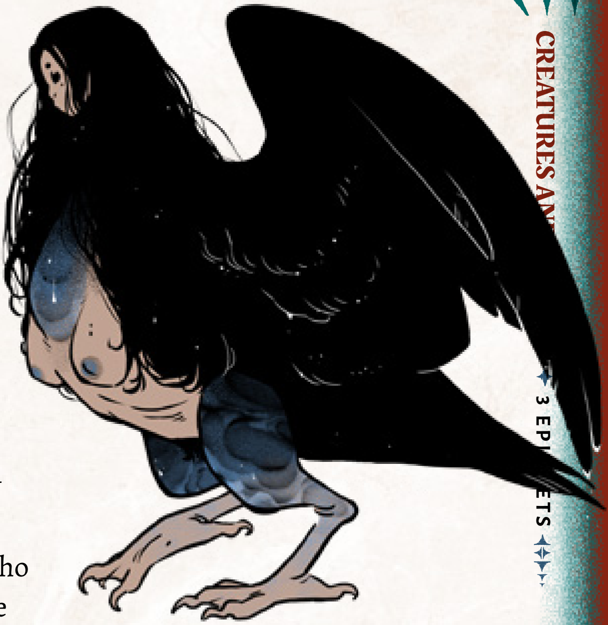
A player can try to **Entice** a pirate captain with gold, large rations of food or valuable information for future raids. They will not take you at your word, but may grant you mercy if your word holds true.

Give the pirate captain 3 Epithets: "whose blade moves swift and true," "who is a masterful deceiver," and "who commands their crew's respect."

Siren

Sirens feed off emotions and memories. Survivors have likened a siren's song to a divine calling, a mother's lullaby, or a lover's cry—sweet, warm, welcoming, and completely irresistible. However it manifests, the song promises to fill a void within the listener's spirit.

> When a player hears the siren's song, ask them what their adventurer's soul desires, and how the song brings it to the surface. Let these thoughts, memories, and emotions lead the adventurer towards the siren and danger.



A siren's upper torso looks human; their lower half resembles a bird. Their wingspan is double the length of their body, making them an impressive sight in flight. Their mottled plumage blends into rockfaces, dead trees, and other cover. They are intelligent and talkative, though they speak in borrowed voices.

Sirens are solitary creatures who nevertheless congregate where prey is plentiful. As a result, they may attack alone or in a group as large as five.

Sirens typically perch on rocks in the ocean and on coastlines, where they can dive for fish while waiting for humans, their preferred prey. When seen inland, it is along lonely roads where travelers may approach in small numbers. Their keen eyes sight prey from afar. Then they begin to sing, luring the listener closer, until the siren can rend them with razor-sharp claws. Clever sirens let the landscape do their work, dashing prey across the cliffs, where the siren can devour them at leisure.

Once the prey is dead, a siren will eat the body quickly to steal the victim's voice and recent memories before they dissipate. The siren then adds these voices to their repertoire, which makes them cruelly effective at drawing in those who come looking for the first victim.

Sirens mate only once a year. Their mating call is always different, an amalgam of their accumulated prey's yearning for love. Nesting sirens pass on their victims' memories to the eggs and croon to the chicks in the voices of the dead.

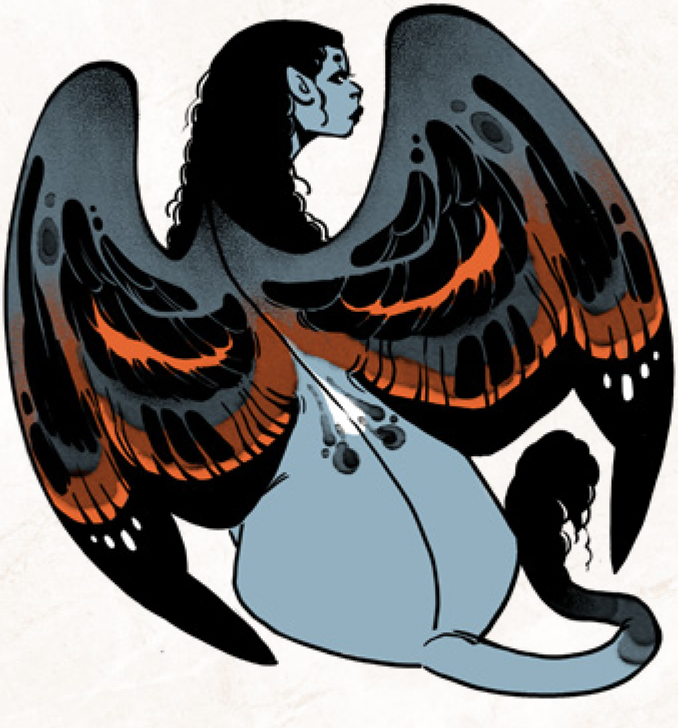
To **Entice** a siren, an adventurer must first overcome the siren song's own Enticement. Then, if it is the siren's mating period, the adventurer may sing their own love song—in effect, mimicking a siren birdcall. One may also negotiate with a siren by offering a memory freely. Once the siren accepts, the memory is wiped from one's mind.

Give the Siren 3 Epithets: "who steals the voices of mortals", "who merely mimics human affection" and "who leads prey into the abyss."

Sphinx, Greater

The greater sphinx has the body of a gigantic lion and an equally enormous, human-like face. The wings of flighted sphinxes can span forty feet or more. Sphinxes love knowledge; they absorb the intelligence of everything they eat. Their size allows them to prey on many wise creatures and learned humans. They can tell truth from a lie and have no patience for the latter.

Female Sphinxes have wings; they fly great distances in search of a nest. They prefer inhabited or once-inhabited places: an Atlantean ruin, a village, or an entire City. Once they find a suitable place, they fatten their wits by eating the nest's inhabitants. They ask riddles. The purpose seems to be twofold: when hunting, to gauge their prey's intelligence, and when mating, to engage in playful banter while assessing the prospective mate's fitness.



Male sphinxes have no wings. They store up knowledge in preparation for mating season, but they will not speak unless asked a question they find compelling. A male sphinx is an itinerant hunter, collecting secrets from his prey, until he finds another sphinx's nest. Then he will offer his secrets in a mating display. Occasionally, the male sphinx finds a nesting site so perfect that he seizes it first, in anticipation of an inevitable mate. But this is a rare gamble.

Other sphinxes, neither male nor female, grow wings anew every rainy season—a process that leaves them ravenous—then shed them like antlers as winter approaches. They are as likely to ask riddles as to wait for others to speak. Humans prize the discarded bones and feathers of an androgynous sphinx as talismans, sorcerous ingredients, wards against attack, or decoration.

Both female and androgynous sphinxes guard their nests fiercely. Its citizens serve as a food source, a potential offering to a mate, and a captive hunting ground for their juveniles. Once a female sphinx finds a suitable nest, she keeps it for life. An androgynous sphinx, on the other hand, flies in search of a new nest—their own or that of a female—every year. A male sphinx joins his mate's nest; after the mate dies, he guards the nest for the rest of his life and does not mate again.

Sphinxes find knowledge compelling. When one encounters a winged sphinx, the sphinx may ask a riddle. A wingless sphinx, on the other hand, will simply block the adventurers' way and wait for them to speak. Adventurers may forestall an attack by engaging the sphinx's curiosity—answering the riddles, asking thought-provoking questions, or even telling a joke.

Juvenile sphinxes reach maturity in a year. Before then, they terrorize the prey in their nest. Then they leave to amass their own store of knowledge. Sphinxes seem to have no natural life span; they will live as long as food is available.

Some locations' residents arrive at an arrangement with a sphinx, granting it rulership (actual or ceremonial) of their City in exchange for periodic sacrifices of wise and clever people. The sphinx defends the City from external threats and considers themself "mated to" the citizens.

While there are many "sphinx riddles" online, choose ones the players can learn the answers to. Relate them to what the sphinx is guarding, so the adventurers can learn the answer by **EXPLORING** the region; or relate them to the sphinx's personality, so they can **FIGURE OUT** the sphinx. You may feed the players the right answers or questions to ask, as if the adventurers puzzled it out.

Players may **Entice** a sphinx by engaging in witty banter. Wit is so powerful and gratifying a drive that it need not always relate to literal mating.

Give the sphinx 3 Epithets: "who devours knowledge," "who guards their nest fiercely," and "whose claws rend falsehoods."

4 Epithets

Atlantean Mage

Deep within the Atlantean ruins slumbers a mage who is a withered remnant of the once grand civilization. When Atlantis was being destroyed, a few powerful sorcerers ensconced their bodies in their chambers, using sorcery to put themselves into a healing slumber until such a time when they could wake and restore the former glory of Atlantis.

The essence of the Atlantean mage is tethered to the memory of Atlantis. This means that they can't leave the ruins without amassing enough energy to imbue into a spell that can sever that connection. That power exists outside of their domain.

Adventurers might awaken an Atlantean mage within the ruins or they may find them awake and plotting their return.

An Atlantean mage's first goal is to gain freedom from their self-made prisons. Their second goal is to reinstate the power of Atlantis. They will do everything within their power to succeed. They loathe the gods and will leap at the chance to repay them for the destruction of their world.

The Atlantean mage has mastered command over the elements. Their sorcery can ensnare minds, summon ancient Atlantean constructs, and absorb energy from creatures they touch. They seek any forms of life to siphon into their spell.

Before executing any of their meticulously planned enterprises, a mage will ask for information about the world outside. They are forthcoming with information about Atlantis, though they keep their own intentions hidden within the recesses of their minds.

They exist in an induced state of immortality and can only be killed by severing their soul tether. This will rapidly age the mage, quickly turning them into dust and bones.

Their years of solitude have stripped them of most of whatever once made them capable of empathy. They once loved and cared about others. They were great champions of sorcery and innovation. Now they have been reduced to beings with a different purpose.

Adventurers may try to **Entice** an Atlantean mage by allying themselves with the mage against a god or by convincingly reminding the mage of what it felt like to love.

Give the Atlantean mage 4 Epithets: "who is a master of sorcery," "who seeks to reshape their world," "who must break free of their shackles," and "who is a sworn enemy to gods."

Bull of Heaven

The bull of heaven is a massive creature. It has pale, pupilless, glowing eyes, horns harder than diamond and silver slits on both sides of its abdomen that flash lightning. Its bellow is often mistaken for wrathful thunder in the sky. A stomp from its hooves can cause an avalanche and a single snort can carve caverns down from the surface of the earth. The bull of heaven is all consuming. It drinks rivers dry and devours the crops of entire cities in four to five days. Its presence brings famine and destruction.

The bull of heaven resides in the tallest peaks that hold up the heavens. It spends most of its time hibernating and ventures into the lands below once every few hundred years to feed and mate. They are few and can live for over a millennium. There have been times the presence of a bull of heaven caused a mass exodus from cities, with the inhabitants returning years later to rebuild from what remained of their homes.

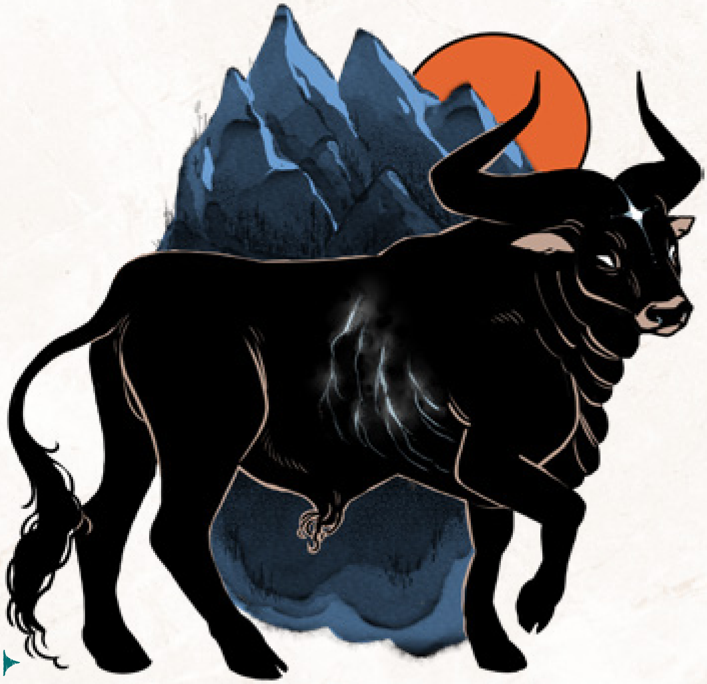
The gods have been known to provoke the bull out of the mountains as a form of punishment to mortals. But they do this at great risk to their own safety. The bull of heaven comes from the same plane as the gods. Its horns and hooves have power that can maim them.

> Adventurers can harvest the leather, bones, horns and hooves of the bull of heaven to create armaments strong enough to fight the Pantheon. The right craftsman can turn these into hammers, daggers, blow horns and armor.

The bull of heaven's arrival is portended by a silent storm that slowly rumbles in. The storm is devoid of lightning and thunder. The dark clouds and rain feel like a quiet blessing from the gods. Hours later, when the bull arrives, its lightning flashes hit the skies, turning the storm into an unforgiving gale.

Many believe the bull to be an executioner of the gods. Few think of it as a force of rebirth, leveling what once stood, to make room for a new world.

Give the bull of heavens 4 Epithets: "the bringer of storms," "whose breath breaks the earth," "the scourge of harvests," "who bleeds gods."



City Tyrant

The ruler of the city, or one of them. The city tyrant is a royal, a feuding collection of families, or a republic. They are the ones who control the city. They are trained fighters, tacticians, artists, philosophers and diplomats. They decide the law and preside over every important administrative, economic, political and military decision involving the city. The city and everything within it is theirs to command and they treat it as such - some with the care of a parent, others with the indifference of an owner of something replaceable. They are chosen by the gods to fulfill this duty, and so they rule as one beholden only to those gods.

It is the city tyrant's duty to serve the city and work towards its socio-economic fulfilment and progress. It is also their duty to keep their city safe. And so they must create policies that advance the economy and take measures to assure the security of the people. This means they must prepare contingencies for disasters, famine and war. They must also pay attention to the supply and demand of food and encroachment of outsiders within their domain.

Different city tyrants may have different approaches towards what they believe is the best kind of progress or what matters for the city's security. One may focus on supporting business within the city and improving infrastructure while another may choose to focus on trade outside the city walls and building their military might.

The city tyrant has many ministers and officials who are experts within their own fields. They preside over the minute details following the rules laid down by the tyrant, reporting back to the tyrant as and when necessary. They are extensions of the city tyrant's arm, charged with executing the will of the tyrant within their field.

A city tyrant must work hand-in-hand with the temple officials when it comes to important matters. And so, they are forced to play a constant game of chess with the temple leaders in the struggle to gain more influence over the others. They are constantly thinking of ways to sway the public to their side. The city tyrant must strike a balance with the responsibilities they assign to the different temples within the city to gain the support of them all. However, it is not uncommon for a city tyrant to favor one temple over another to meet their own goals.

Give the city tyrant 4 Epithets: "who commands legions," "who shoulders immense responsibility," "who must balance the power within the city," and "who writes the destiny of their subjects."

Gallu Demon

The gallu are monstrous demons that serve the ruler of the Underworld. They are 12 feet tall standing up, with elongated limbs, sharp claws, three horns rising out of their foreheads and menacing spikes towering out of their backs. Their fangs are too large for their mouths to contain and their eyes flash with the darkness of the Underworld where they make their home.

The appearance of a gallu demon in the mortal realm means that there is a cosmic imbalance that must be put right. It means that a *gidim* (soul residing in the Underworld) or some other creature has escaped to or been pulled into the mortal realm from the Underworld.

It is the gallu demon's duty to usher souls into the Underworld. They are an officer of death, invested with the charge of policing the boundary between the living and the dead. They are also charged with hunting fugitive souls to haul them back to the Underworld and restore cosmic order. They fulfill these duties without remorse.

A gallu demon uses its fearsome countenance to terrify the living. They destroy anything and anyone in their path. They are tireless and don't require rest or sustenance.

The gallu demons answer only to their master. As officers, they have a wide latitude to interpret cosmic law. Some gallu are not above pulling down mortals ahead of their appointed time, or making a deal to trade one mortal's life for another's.

The demons use life-draining weapons like stone maces carved from the banks of the river of Death, or flails that house tortured souls. A hit from their weapons can weaken a soul, stunning it in place.

A gallu demon cannot be killed. It can only be sent back to the Underworld where its master awaits.

Give the gallu demon 4 Epithets: "the reaper of souls," "who upholds the cosmic order," "who strikes fear into the hearts of the living," and "who unquestioningly obeys their master."

High Temple Adept

Leader of one of the temples in the city. They are chosen by their god to administer the laws of the temple to the people of the city. It is their duty to commune with their god and express its will to the faithful. Their word is final on any interpretation and enforcement of all religious matters within their domain. They act as religious advisor to the rulers and weigh in on economic, political, administrative and military decisions. They are extremely influential in the city and have as many responsibilities to fulfill as the city rulers.

The high temple adept presides over all temple matters. It is the duty of the temple to educate the people on the will of the gods. They hold rallies and sermons within the temple premises informing the populace of the will and desires of the gods. The temple advises the people in times of grief. They perform ceremonies and rituals for the dead. They make sacrifices to the gods for the wellbeing of the city. The temple prospers with more faithful residents within the city. It is the high temple adept's job to think of ways to bring more people into the faith as well as retain the faithful.

In turn, the high temple adept is rewarded with divine miracles. These miracles primarily heal. When needed, the gods deign to bestow powers of destruction upon the high temple adept.

> Rarely, a high temple adept may forego the divine will of their god to advance their own selfish agendas through the power they hold.

The high temple adept works directly with the city tyrant and the leaders of the other temples to ensure the smooth workings of the city. The push and pull between the city administration and the temple is important for the functioning of the city and the lives of the people. However, it is a constant struggle for influence over the people. The high temple adept must create religious laws and policies to sway the people's allegiances towards their temple over the city administration and the other temples.

They have many lower-ranking adepts at their disposal who fulfill various temple duties. They also command holy warriors trained in the art of the blade, and a smaller contingent of divine miracle-workers. The high temple adept leads the temple legions.

Give the high temple adept 4 Epithets: "who executes the will of gods," "who shepherds the faithful," "who must balance the power within the city," and "who must remain obedient to their god."

Rukh

The rukh is a giant bird that stands 20 feet tall with a wingspan that can go as wide as 48 feet. Its feathers are brown and as large as palm leaves. It has the body of an eagle, with a long ribbon-like tail emerging from bushy hind feathers. It is known as the Sovereign of the Sky. A beat of its wings can cause whirlwinds and blow storm clouds away. It can easily carry an adult elephant into the sky in its talons, and its beak can cleave metal.

Very few rukh exist. They were once two normal birds that flew to the tallest mountain holding up the heavens and made their nest there. Their proximity to the source of all divine power greatly increased their lifespan and changed their physiology. They have grown large and strong for over a thousand years. It is unknown how much longer they can live and how much larger they can grow.

The rukh are ancient creatures and have seen many civilizations come and go from their perch. They are indifferent to the workings of humans and are wary of the gods. They hunt large prey like mushussu and bears; they are particularly fond of eating elephants.

The rukh lay 2-3 eggs once every five hundred years. The parents care for the chicks until they can fly, after which they must leave the nest to find a mountain peak of their own. Rukh eggs are priceless artifacts sought after by sorcerers, city rulers and temples.

Many believe that eating a rukh egg will bestow an elongated lifespan. This is yet to be proven as most who have returned from such a journey have been unsuccessful in acquiring the egg.

The rukh usually stay within their territory. However, the Gods sometimes hunt the rukh for sport, driving them into populated lands and sowing chaos and destruction.

Give the rukh 4 Epithets: "who rules the skies unchallenged," "who commands the wind," "who is ever-growing," and "who blows away their enemies."

5 Epithets

Anunnaki

The anunnaki are considered demigods. They take many forms, but primarily present themselves as humanoid, with wings and the appendages of their preferred animal (like a head, horns, feet, hooves, tail, scales, etc.). They have divine power, enough to shape and change small things within the mortal realm. They can create, destroy, and heal, among other godly abilities.

They are officers and judges of the world. They step into the world in the stead of the prime deities. It is on their advice and experiences that the gods make decisions involving the mortal realm. They are trusted subordinates that aren't beholden to the gods they serve. They have autonomy to make their own decisions and do as they please. The gods may call on them as a favour or command them in dire situations, but they can choose to decline at the risk of angering them and facing their wrath. This has made some of them cautious and others arrogant.

The anunnaki divide their god's domains among themselves. For example, the sun god's domain may be divided into a domain of life, light, heat, drought, and joy. Similarly, the underworld god's domain may be divided into darkness, death, peace, sorrow, and transformation.

The anunnaki carry out their duties with zeal. They like travelling the mortal realm and often disguise themselves as humans to experience humanity or sow seeds of change.

Adventurers can meet an anunnaki early in the game, as a friend, ally or enemy to later encounter in their divine form. Give the anunnaki a more human quality mixed with an air of mysteriousness.

The anunnaki collect tales and songs from the mortal realm. They are whimsical and passionate, and are constantly at odds with each other on the fate of humanity. They are proud beings. They despise the gallu and sukkals, who have given up their freedom in exchange for serving a single master.

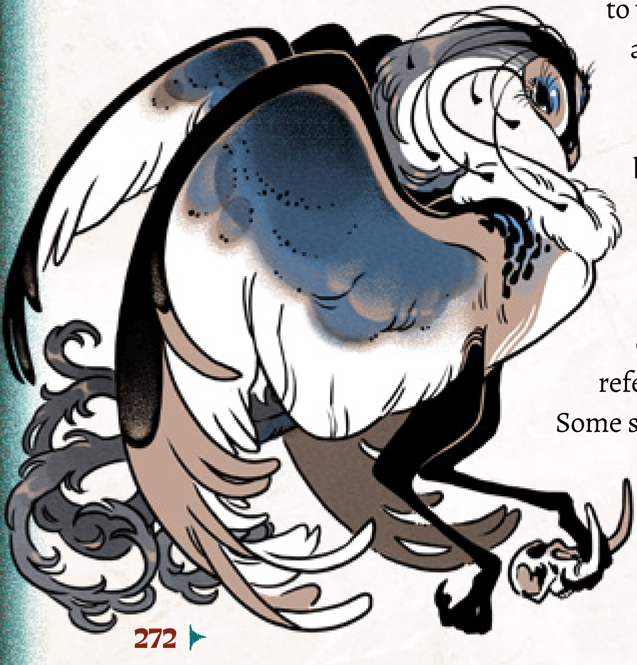
A player can **Entice** an anunnaki by appealing to their nature, promising a human experience that the anunnaki desires or by showing extraordinary qualities.

Give the anunnaki 5 epithets: "who wields divine power," "who is independent of any master," "who walks the mortal realm," "who lives with passion," and "whose pride is unbreakable."

Anqa

The anqa is a mysterious, colossal bird and a paragon of beauty. Most of its features are amorphous and resemble a small part of every living being. This means everyone experiences a different visage of the anqa simultaneously. However, there are a few distinct features that stand out to everyone. The anqa has a long white neck, a beaked face, four wings, and flaming feathers in shifting hues of the rainbow. Whenever the anqa has been spotted, it has always been described as "glowing" in the night sky.

The anqa is one of a kind. No one knows where it came from or when it will leave this world. Its sightings are extremely rare and are said to portend bad things. The truth is that the anqa is tethered to this world. It flourishes as the world does and perishes with the world. Every time the world is remade, so is the anqa. The anqa wants to save the world. It makes itself known to warn of impending peril and remind people that there's very little time to stop a cataclysm. This has been misinterpreted to mean that the anqa is a bad omen.



Many speak of the "light" of the anqa. The "light" refers to its flaming plumage. Some say it is the undying flames that wreath the anqa. Whatever form the story takes, the "light" is said to be a force of immense power. If harnessed, it has the power to bring heaven on earth or destroy the world for the underworld to rise and claim. It is said that the "light" even has the power to kill a god. The light of the anqa can be given or stolen.

Many believe that the anqa pulls the sun across the sky. That is why it is never seen. Some see the anqa as a destroyer, who will burn the world to cleanse it. Others simply see it as an eternal source of power, far beyond the reaches of humanity.

Some who believe in the anqa's power seek to steal its "light." Anyone, from the powerless who seek to ascend to godhood, to sorcerers who require a life force to power spells, covet what the light offers. Some want it enough that they might even orchestrate a cataclysm to be able to steal a small mote of the "light."

The anqa is a helpful being. However, if it senses untruths or trickery, it will fight. It doesn't seek to kill, but it will permanently maim anyone it distrusts.

Give the Anqa 5 Epithets: "who is a paragon of beauty," "who glows with hope," "who is a symbol of rebirth," "who is ever burning," and "who will help those who can save the world."

Leviathan

The leviathan has faded into legend and myth. It is now a story people tell their children to get them to behave. The truth is very different. The leviathan is a gargantuan serpent that slumbers beneath the world. It has seven reptilian heads on long necks, tough scales and four clawed feet. Every head comes with a generous set of teeth, each as tall as a person. The leviathan roars so loud that it can be heard in the furthest reaches of the world. Its body can coil around an entire city, and its jaws can crush most anything, save the constructions of the gods.

The leviathan is older than the world itself. The gods had to work together to defeat it and even then, they were only able to trap it under the world, where it has stayed ever since. The few times it has surfaced, it has only managed to rear a head or two into the living world. And even these smaller avatars laid waste to cities and smaller civilizations.

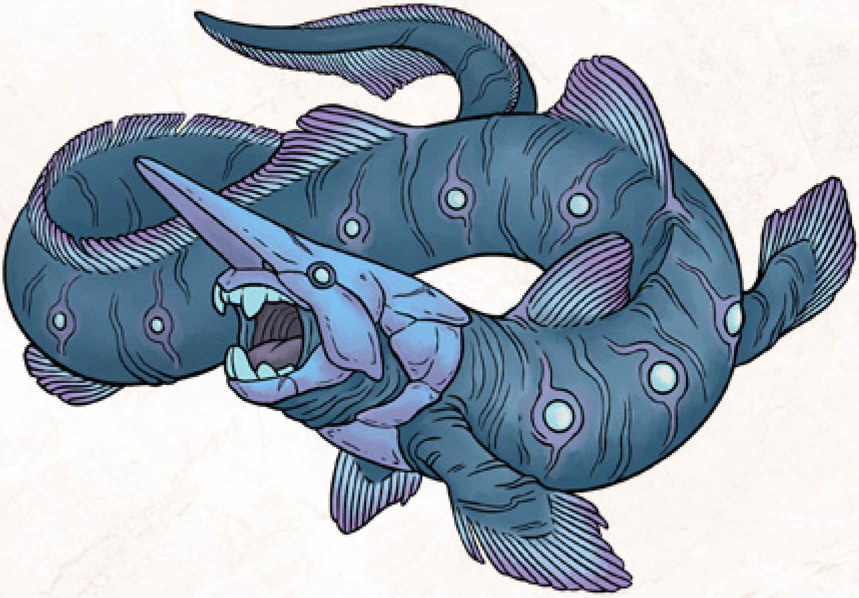
The leviathan is a great hunger. It seeks to consume everything until there is nothing left but it. Until it becomes the world and can birth a new place of its own design. It cannot be tamed or bargained with. It is chaos incarnate and feeds on stray souls that wander into its presence.

The gods fear the leviathan, for it has the power to destroy them. Its teeth can pierce through divine beings and its mind is immune to the gods' divine powers. The gods' advantage has always been this: the leviathan's insatiable hunger and solitary purpose has stripped it of intelligent thought.

With the right tools, the leviathan's heads can be destroyed or chopped off, temporarily affording its enemies the advantage. But they each grow back in time.

The leviathan sleeps near a gate of the underworld, too small for it to escape from. It is always waiting for the opportunity to escape and consume the world.

Give the leviathan 5 Epithets: "who is insatiable," "bane of the gods," "who is undying," "the devourer of worlds," and "who seeks freedom."



Sukkal

The sukkal are servants of the gods. They present themselves as humans carrying staves of power. They are kin to the anunnaki. However, their allegiances lie with the gods they serve. They are enforcers of the divine decree and executioners of those who defy the gods. Many people think of the sukkal as avatars of the gods—and while they are individuals, they might as well be.

The sukkal are the ones who relay messages between the gods and the high temple adepts. They are charged by the gods to bestow power upon the temple, to collect sacrifices and reward those who please the gods. They carry their divine power with pride. They make sure that any in their presence know what they are and demand worship as if they were a god themselves.

The sukkal are loyal to a fault. They greatly seek their masters' approval and will go out of their way to please them. This sometimes leads them into the mortal realm, where they interfere in the lives of humans and cause curious changes, disasters and misgivings in the faith of the people.

The sukkal can travel great distances in seconds. They have divine tethers to the temples of their deities where they can pull themselves in an instant. They can command most divine beings except for the anunnaki and the gods themselves. If a god should ever decide to enter the mortal realm, they are preceded by a sukkal—the harbinger of difficult times.

A sukkal seeks to ascend to godhood. Its loyalty is an extension of its desire to be like the god it serves. A player can **Entice** a sukkal by convincingly offering them a way of ascension.

Give the sukkal 5 Epithets: "whose loyalty is unwavering," "whose staff commands divine miracles," "the harbinger of the gods," "who desires worship" and "the divine executioner."

APPENDICES

Names for People, Cities, and Immortals

by Sean D'souza

People

These names are categorized by their meanings and how they come across to others. Any name can be used to represent a person of any gender.

CASUAL NAMES

1. Addirah: "ferry"
2. Adea: "spring flood"
3. Anur: "horizon"
4. Anusan: "evening sky"
5. Ashag: "wish"
6. Dugmu: "beautiful song"
7. Emeshul: "summer flower"
8. Engiz: "cook"
9. Igira: "heron"
10. Kirihe: "abundant orchard"
11. Kiru: "gift of the earth"
12. Kumlah: "breadwinner"
13. Maaz : "joyful"
14. Ninurisa: "sweetheart"
15. Shahul: "mirthful"
16. Shuba: "agate"
17. Simusa: "shining one"
18. Tahara: "blazing with kindness"
19. Tila: "full of life"
20. Tirtur: "child of the forest"
21. Uga: "raven"
22. Uragar: "farmer"
23. Zagin: "lapis lazuli"
24. Zizi: "unending breath"

ARISTOCRATIC NAMES

25. Barsar: "king of the world"
26. Dusag: "born to lead"
27. Enki: "lord of the earth"
28. Erin: "balancer of scales"
29. Idamma: "birther of rivers"
30. Kalama: "precious parent"
31. Kiana: "land and sky"
32. Kidgal: "great builder"
33. Nimmel: "blazing prince"
34. Ninnu: "lord/lady of light"
35. Umer: "light in the storm"
36. Urnamma: "legendary king"
37. Zalana: "bringer of abundance"
38. Zuraba: "wisdom of the sea"

WARLIKE NAMES

39. Alimsi: “powerful one”
40. Antug: “weapon of the gods”
41. Balizi: “changed by fire”
42. Daguna: “victor”
43. Durri: “breaker of chains”
44. Kissam: “invincible”
45. Kuliana: “dragonfly”
46. Lahmer: “stormbringer”
47. Liliz: “strong of heart”
48. Nugin: “face of justice”
49. Pazur: “warrior chief”
50. Sargzi: “breath of the world”
51. Sisig: “whirlwind”
52. Uri: “protector”
53. Urmagi: “lion man”
54. Ushugal: “dragon chief”

PIOUS NAMES

55. Addiran: “bridge to the heavens”
56. Anubur: “servant of the sky god”
57. Dagizi: “holy fire”
58. Dumuzid: “faithful son”
59. Eanna: “sanctuary”
60. Ensu: “blessed by the gods”
61. Gudea: “servant of the goddess”
62. Izila: “purifies with fire”
63. Meleme: “oracle”
64. Ninug: “death’s mistress”
65. Shagina: “true heart”
66. Shikina: “healing balm”
67. Shuilla: “prayer”
68. Uanna: “heavenly light”
69. Uteren: “soldier of the sun”
70. Utubur: “servant of the sun god”

NAMES FOR ARTISTS AND PERFORMERS

71. Andal: “soaring”
72. Ashme: “sparkler”
73. Darishe: “eternal”
74. Dusim: “fragrant”
75. Erisish: “bringer of laughter”
76. Hada: “shining brightly”
77. Lamarsh: “inspired”
78. Lunizal: “showstopper”
79. Sarabi: “voice of the world”
80. Sherzi: “bright star”
81. Sima: “aromatic”
82. Usha: “enchanter”
83. Zami : “hymn of praise,” “lyre”
84. Zila: “spirit of the water”

MYSTERIOUS NAMES

85. Alad: “life force”
86. Antaka: “godkiller”
87. Bardumu: “child of a foreign city”
88. Dezir: “banisher of sadness”
89. Dugan: “child of darkness”
90. Ekus: “bringer of destruction”
91. Gidim: “ghost”
92. Henzer: “weakling”
93. Kulgiri: “refuge of friends”
94. Lulna: “deceiver”
95. Miri: “encircling snake”
96. Mumu: “reborn”
97. Namusan: “shaper of destiny”
98. Radlum: “fruit tree”
99. Tigi: “healer”
100. Ushbuzur: “secret kept by blood”

Cities

1. Andag: "resting place of the gods"
2. Bad-e-ur: "armored fortress"
3. Bad-idaia: "city of five rivers"
4. Barag-usum: "nest of dragons"
5. Dabisi: "city in the valley"
6. Etur: "land of temples"
7. Ki-gulsig: "land of destroyed bricks"
8. Kitamul: "city beneath the stars"
9. Kizen-mah: "land of the great festival"
10. Kudugu: "land of the severed head"
11. Kugiri: "refuge of the holy"
12. Kurzu: "entrance to knowledge"
13. Lasilim: "land of good health"
14. Sudra: "the drowned city"
15. Udim: "city built from clay"
16. Urlagin: "the royal city"
17. Urlunizu: "city of thieves"
18. Ursahulla: "city of many delights"
19. Urur: "city of beasts"
20. Uturu: "city of the sun"

Deities and Demons

Sumerian religion goes hard. These are some—not all—of the immortals that the Sumerians feared, worshiped, or both. Reuse their names or domains as you like for your own epics.

Sumerians and Babylonians' gods created a mostly orderly world, but in this game, order is the problem. As a result, gods who meant peaceful tranquility for the Sumerians may signify suffocating restriction in ***Defy the Gods***.

1. Abzu: God of the Abyssal Sea
2. Adad: Storm God
3. Anu: God of the Heavens
4. Anzu: Divine Storm Bird
5. Asag: Demon of Disease
6. Ashur: God of Sunlight and Rulers
7. Bau: Goddess of Prosperity
8. Enbilu: God of Canals and Boundaries
9. Enki: God of Wisdom and Civilization
10. Enlil: Lord of the Wind
11. Enshag: God of Wine and Drunkenness
12. Ereshkigal: Queen of the Underworld
13. Gatumdag: God of Good Fortune
14. Girtablullu: Scorpion-Man Demon
15. Gula: Goddess of Healing and Medicine
16. Inanna: Goddess of Love, Sex, and War
17. Ishkur: God of Thunderstorms
18. Kusarikku: Bull-Man Demon
19. Lamashtu: Demon of Disease and Ill Fortune
20. Namtar: God of Disease and Fate
21. Nanshe: Goddess of Compassion, Interpreter of Dreams
22. Nidaba: Goddess of Writing
23. Ninagal: Queen of the Universe
24. Ninazu: Judge of the Dead
25. Ningal: Goddess of Hunting
26. Ninhursag: Lady of the Sacred Mountain, Mother of the Gods, Goddess of Creation
27. Ninkasi: Goddess of Beer
28. Ninkurra: Goddess of Mountains
29. Ninlammu: Goddess of Purifying Water
30. Ninlil: Goddess of Wind and Open Plains
31. Ninmah: Lady of the Rib, Goddess of Midwives and Destiny
32. Ninshar: Goddess of Oaths
33. Ninurta: Lord of the Good Tree, Abundance, and Prosperity
34. Nuska: God of Purifying Fire
35. Pazuzu: Winged, dog-faced demon
36. Shara: Lord of the Desert, Protector of Travelers
37. Tiamat: Goddess of Primordial Chaos and Boundless Ocean
38. Ugallu: Lion Demon
39. Umudabrutu: Demon of Raging Storms
40. Urash: Goddess of Fertility and Agriculture
41. Urshanabi: Boatman of the Gods
42. Uttu: Goddess of Weaving
43. Utu: Sun God
44. Zisudra: Survivor of the Great Flood

Basic Moves Reference

Moves of Might and Cunning

BOLT

When you want to move openly, energetically, or forcefully—running, leaping, or overcoming an obstacle—invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: you get where you wanted to go, unharmed and ready for what's next; or you vault past the obstacle.

On an 11+: you get there, but choose 1:

- You endanger a friend. The GM will say who takes Wounds, if anyone.
- You sow chaos or destruction. Mark Fire.
- You overshoot your mark or are confronted with a new obstacle.

The GM will say what else happens as a result.

On a 7 or less: you stumble or fall short. Prepare for the worst.

FINESSE

When you want to move carefully or discreetly—manipulating something tricky, stepping silently, or overcoming an obstacle—invoke an Epithet and roll.

On an 8–10: you get or do what you wanted, with no one the wiser.

On an 11+: your curiosity, greed, or ambition has gotten the better of you. Mark Fire. You reach too far or find more than you wanted; the GM will say how.

On a 7 or less: you fumble and someone notices. Maybe you alert the City Watch or a drop of your sweat wakes up a giant snake. Prepare for the worst.

EXPLORE

When you seek your way in a perilous place or examine a strange object, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: ask the GM 2:

- "Where is the best way to go from here?"
- "What is dangerous here?"
- "What does this thing do?"
- "What is valuable here?"
- "What are others missing here?"
- "What here can I use to ________?"

On an 11+: ask the GM 2 above and 1 below:

- "Who gets hurt at my expense?" If you are not sorry, mark Fire.
- "How do I damage what I'm exploring?"
- "How do my actions arouse or intensify the danger here?" You feel a kinship with the danger; mark Fire.

On a 7 or less: ask 1, but you get lost, trapped, or lose something crucial. Prepare for the worst.

FIGURE OUT A PERSON

When you want to learn more about a person, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: ask the GM 1 below, +1 more for each Heart of theirs you spend:

- "What do they want?"
- "How do they feel toward ________?"
- "How could I get them to________?"
- "What do they love the most?"
- "How would they feel if I________?"

On an 11+: you learn too much. Ask 1 above, +1 more for each Heart you spend. Also ask 1 below:

- "What dangerous power has their Heart?"
- "Why do they see me as dangerous?" Mark Fire.
- "How do I fall in love with them or their cause?" Give them +1 Heart.

On a 7 or less: ask 1 question, but you reveal more than you wanted about yourself. They ask you 1 question above, +1 more for each Heart of yours they spend.

Heart Moves

ENTICE

When you appeal to someone's physical or emotional sensibilities, invoke an Epithet and roll.
On an 8–10: you attract their interest. Gain +1 Heart from them, and they choose 1:

- Get flustered and off-balance.
- Betray a World Force for your sake.
- Give in to their desire.

On an 11+: you get in over your head. Gain +1 Heart from them, and they choose 1 above and 1 below:

- You fall for them. They gain +1 Heart from you, too.
- You spark sublime passion. You both mark Fire.

On a 7 or less: your temptation falls flat, attracting a World Force's ire instead. The GM will say what else happens.

INFLUENCE

When you want to help, hinder, or sway someone, spend a Heart of theirs and pick 1:

- Tempt them to do something. If they accept, give them 1 XP. If they refuse, don't spend the Heart.
- Find out what it would take to get them to do what you want. For a side character, they may simply agree.
- Aid or thwart them. After they roll, adjust their result by +/-1.
- Get under their skin. Increase the result of your move against them by +1 after you roll.

When using this move on behalf of side characters who have Hearts on the adventurers, the GM picks from only the first two options.

GIVE YOUR HEART

When you admire someone or fall for them a little, give them 1 Heart.

NAME ME

When you have 4 Hearts from someone, you get a special insight into them—something even they don't know. Now or at the end of the session, ask their player what it is, then offer them a new Epithet to reflect it.

They write the new Epithet in a blank Epithet slot. If they have no blank slots, they replace an existing Epithet. The new Epithet is worth +0. Reduce the Hearts of theirs that you have to 1.

Immortal Moves

BESEECH A FORCE

When you reach for power beyond your grasp, call on a World Force—a Pantheon member, City authority, prince of the Wilds, Death, or legacy of Atlantis. Then, invoke an Epithet and roll. You may spend Hearts from someone allied with the World Force to adjust the roll by +/-1.

On an 8–10: the Force appears before you and aids you ... for a price. Choose 1:

- Let it mold you. In place of the Epithet you invoked, write one that reflects the World Force's vision of you. Its worth remains the same. Take 1 Heart from a member or ally of the World Force as they sympathize with you more.
- The World Force demands your allegiance. Give 1 Heart to a member of the Force.
- Another price of the GM's choice.

On an 11+: all that matters is power. You assume a monstrous aspect, and the Force recognizes itself in you. Mark Fire and give a member of the Force 1 Heart. The Force then serves your most ambitious, selfish, power-hungry wishes. Later, it will ask you to return the favor.

On a 7 or less: the Force intervenes, but as it pleases. Prepare for the worst.

DEFY THE GODS

When you deal a humiliating blow to a mighty World Force by filling your Fire Track or otherwise:

1. First, ask who among those present has 3 Fire marked and chooses to stand with you.
2. Then, roll 2d6 + Fire. Only those who stand with you may make the Influence move to adjust your result.

On an 8–10: you Wound the World Force you're defying, permanently invalidating one of their Epithets. Say how you stand proudly together. Then, you and all who stood with you do the following:

1. Lose your glory, returning to mere humanity: Clear your Fire Track.
2. Grow closer: Give 3 Hearts, spread as you like among those who stood with you. Take up to 3 Hearts in return, spread among all of them.

3. Grow and change. Rewrite one of your Epithets. Increase its worth by +1.

The World Force must give way, for now. But you have triggered a reaction move from them in a later scene.

On an 11+: you briefly take the place of the World Force, Wounding them and permanently invalidating one of their Epithets. Say how you rise to godlike power, spurning any being's commands. All who stood with you mark 1 Wound from being too near your glory. Then, you alone do the following:

1. Keep an ember of your glory: Set your Fire Track to 1.
2. Extend your power: Take a new Doom Move. If you already have all the ones from your playbook, take one from another playbook.

3. Become more monstrous: Overwrite an Epithet with the Doom specified in the Doom Move. Give it a worth of +3.

4. Ask each who stood with you how much your monstrous glory resonates with theirs, from 0 to 3. You now have that many Hearts of theirs. They gain none of yours.

The World Force must give way, for now. But you have triggered a reaction move from them in a later scene.

On a 7 or less: you make a feeble but personally meaningful gesture. The World Force exacts immediate vengeance for your insolence, humbling you and all who stood with you. The GM will say how. Then, you and all who stood with you do all the following:

1. Lose your glory, returning to mere humanity: Clear your Fire Track.
2. Suffer the World Force's punishment: You and all who stood with you take Wounds as directed.

3. Gain 1 Heart from each who stood with you.

Glossary

2d6: Two six-sided dice.

Adventure: The part of the game where you're playing your **characters** in real time.

Adventurer: Player character (PC). A person in the story that a **player** (not the **GM**) is portraying. They have their own playbook.

Atlanteans: The non-human, **mortal** people who lived in **Atlantis**, about 2,000 years before the story takes place. The **Pantheon** destroyed the Atlanteans for discovering or inventing **sorcery**.

Atlantis: The civilization of the **Atlanteans**, spread across several cities and other settlements. Its blasted ruins are visible in lonely places in the **Wilds**.

Basic Move: A **move** that any **player** can make.

Boring: The section of the **Palette Grid** for topics you're not interested in exploring. They're not difficult, just not interesting.

Burning Success: A **result** of 11 or more.

Chaos: The dangerous, unpredictable force that can help the **adventurers** overcome the oppressive forces that want to destroy them. Also called Mother Chaos. It existed before the Pantheon, and it will exist after them.

Character: A person in the story. Could be an **adventurer** (player character) or a **side character** (non-player character).

Civilization: The culture, customs, and laws that **humans** have made.

City: The place where your **adventurers** live: a bustling group of communities encircled by a wall. As a **World Force**, it's also the oppressive ruler(s) and laws that make living in this place difficult.

Creature: Any animal or mythological creature. We don't call them **monsters**. They live in the **Wilds**.

Crisis: The moment when an **adventurer** marks a **Wound** on their last **Epithet**, triggering a tragic scene.

Death: The hungry **World Force** that seeks to trap all **mortals** within the **Underworld**.

Defeated: When a **side character** is unconscious, taken prisoner, or dead after all **Epithets** are **Wounded**.

Domain: Part of reality that a **god** rules or that **sorcery** creeps into.

Doom: A phrase that describes your **adventurer**'s more monstrous self. Replaces one of your **Epithets**. When all you have are Dooms, your story is over.

Downtime: Between adventures, when the time scale zooms out and your **adventurers** go their separate ways.

Downtime Action: The things you can do in **Downtime**.

Easy Fun: The section of the **Palette Grid** for easy topics that you're all interested in exploring in the story.

Epithet: Pronounced EPPY-thet. A phrase that describes what a **character** believes and how they act. Often starts with "who." Each of an **adventurer**'s Epithets has a numerical **worth**.

Fire: A measure of your **adventurer**'s immortal pride.

Fire Track: The four angular checkboxes on the right side of your **playbook sheet**.

Gallu: The demons who seek to drag the Revenant back down to the **Underworld**.

Games Master: "GM" for short. The person who facilitates the game for the other players.

Glowing Success: A **result** of 8 to 10.

GM: See **Games Master**.

God: A deity of any gender, including goddesses and demons.

Heart: A measure of emotional or romantic influence. When someone has your Heart, you care what they think about you.

Human: All the people, including the **adventurers**, whom the **Pantheon** made after destroying the **Atlanteans**. Human is also the experience of living a brief, **mortal** life and loving others.

Immortal: Any being, like a **god**, who doesn't die. Sometimes they do, though.

Invoke: Pick an **Epithet** that best fits what you're trying to do in the story.

Lapis Lazuli: A bright blue stone associated with royalty.

Let's Take Care: The section of the **Palette Grid** for difficult topics that you're all interested in exploring in the story while carefully checking in with each other.

Make a Move: Pick a **move** to represent what you're doing in the story and do what it says.

Mark Fire: Tick off another box on your **Fire Track**.

Mark XP: Tick off another box on your **XP Track**.

Mesopotamia: Part of Iraq. One of the places that invented cities and writing.

Miss: A **result** of 7 or less.

Monster: Your **adventurer**, after you have replaced all their **Epithets** with **Dooms**.

Mortal: Any being who is fated to die, although it usually refers to **humans**.

Move: A small set of rules that resolves a specific situation in the story.

Not for Us: The section of the **Palette Grid** for difficult, uninteresting topics.

Orientalism: The tendency to think of some places and peoples as exotic, irrational, and excessive, and the story elements that reinforce this tendency.

Palette Grid: A tool for content calibration invented by Jay Dragon for her game *Seven Part Pact*.

Pantheon: The group of **gods** who rule the **World**.

Playbook: The rules and **moves** that say who an **adventurer** is and what they can do, including their personal description and **Epithets**.

Playbook Move: A **move** that only one **player** can make. Listed on their **playbook sheet**.

Playbook Sheet: The sheet or sheets of paper with all your **playbook**'s details on it.

Player: Anyone who is playing the game and is not the **GM**.

Queer: Where to start. Being unlike most people in terms of sexuality or gender. Queer people catch a lot of hell for not conforming with the majority. Being queer is difficult and wonderful—like every other way of being **human**. Some people who fit this definition don't like the word "queer," and you know, that's fine.

Result: The sum of two six-sided dice, plus the **worth** of the **Epithet** you invoked, and plus or minus the **Hearts** that others spent to adjust your roll.

Session: The part of the game that you play in one sitting.

Session Zero: The first **session** of playing the game, where you do all the things that come before playing your first **adventure**: create your **adventurers**, build the **World Forces**, establish relationships, and play your first **World Scene**.

Shade: A **mortal** after they die and lose their body. Usually trapped in the **Underworld**.

Side Character: Non-player character or NPC. A person in the story that the GM is portraying. They do not have a playbook and exist for the GM to make conflict interesting for the players.

Sorcery: The world-changing energy that harnesses **Chaos**, destabilizes reality, and transforms people.

Special Heart Move: A **playbook** move for quiet moments that lets you clear all your **Wounds**.

Stars: Things you appreciated about the **session** and your fellow **players**.

Sumer: The earliest **civilization** in ancient **Mesopotamia**. Its people were Sumerians.

Thieves' Guild: The supreme group of organized crime in the **City**.

Trigger: Something in the story that calls for a **move** before the story can continue.

Underworld: The underground place, far below us, where **Death** and the **shades** dwell.

Wilds: The vast, trackless places outside the **City** where **creatures** live.

Wishes: Things you'd like to see more or less of in future **sessions**.

World: The sum of all the oppressive **World Forces** and all the people who are aligned with them and help enable that oppression.

World Force: A being or group that defines how the **World** works, often in ways that make the **adventurers**' lives difficult.

Wound: Physical or emotional harm that makes you mark an **Epithet** as **Wounded**.

Wounded: When an **Epithet** is **worth** a flat value of -1.

Worth: A number assigned to an **Epithet** that modifies your dice roll.

XP: Experience Point. A measure of how much your **adventurer** is learning.

XP Question: A question you answer at the end of the **session** that lets you **mark XP**.

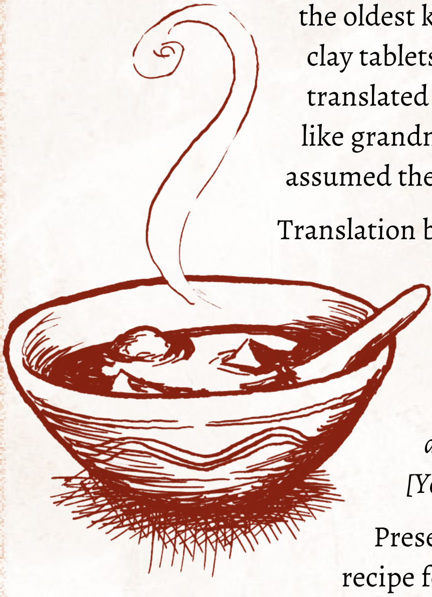
XP Track: The five circular checkboxes in the middle of your **playbook sheet**.

Sumerian Supper

When you sit down to play a game together, be sure to take care of your bodies. That includes frequent bio breaks and food of some sort, like the following delicious recipe from Ryan Khan. It takes about an hour and a half to prepare, although most of that time it's just doing its own thing in the pot. It feeds four to five people.

Tuh'u: a Lamb Soup

by Ryan Khan



The Yale Babylonian Collection contains some of the oldest known recorded recipes. Inscribed onto clay tablets in cuneiform, Klaus Wagensonner translated several of them. These recipes are much like grandma's: No amounts are given, and it's assumed the chef is already familiar with the dish.

Translation by Klaus Wagensonner:

> *Tuh'u. Leg meat is used. You prepare water. You add fat. You sear. You fold in salt, beer, onion, arugula, cilantro, Persian shallot, cumin, and red beet, and [you crush] leek and garlic. You sprinkle coriander on top. [You add] kurrat and fresh cilantro.*

Presented here is my interpretation of the recipe for Tuh'u—a lamb soup.

Ingredients

- 1 lb lamb shank, cut into 1 inch cubes
- 3 red beets, cut into 1 inch chunks
- 1 leek (white and light green parts), finely chopped
- 1 white onion, cut into 1 inch pieces
- 5 cloves of garlic, finely chopped

- ½ tbsp ghee
- 4 cups (32 oz) vegetable broth
- 1 cup wheat beer (weiss beer or hefeweizen)
- ½ cup barley
- 2 cups arugula
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- Cilantro, roughly chopped (optional)
- Green onion, finely chopped (optional)
- 1 loaf sourdough bread (optional)

Instructions

1. Prepare your vegetables: cut the onion into 1 inch pieces. Peel and cut the beets into chunks. Finely chop the leek and garlic. Set half the leek and garlic aside.
2. Cut the lamb into 1 inch chunks and season with cumin and kosher salt.
3. Heat a large pot over medium heat. Once hot, add the ghee. Add the lamb and brown on each side. Add half the garlic and half the leek, stirring occasionally. Cook until fragrant.
4. Remove the lamb, leek, and garlic from the pot and set aside.
5. In the same pot, add the vegetable broth and the beer, then bring to a boil. Once boiling, add the onion, the beets, the remaining leek, and the remaining garlic. Add salt to taste.

6. Return the previously cooked lamb, leek, and garlic to the pot, along with any juices that have collected. Bring the pot back to a boil, then reduce the heat to low. Simmer covered over low heat for 30 minutes.
7. Stir in barley and simmer for another 25 minutes, or until the barley is tender.
8. If adding green onion and cilantro, chop it up.
9. Remove the pot from the heat and stir in the arugula.
10. Ladle into bowls. Top each bowl with green onion and cilantro (optional). Serve with sourdough bread.

Tips

Make sure to wash the leek thoroughly. Sand can get in between the tops and make for a rather unappetising experience.

Variations

- Replace the lamb shank with cubed stewing lamb.
- If you're having a hard time finding barley, consider replacing it with brown rice or pearl couscous.
- For a vegetarian take on this, skip the lamb, and use vegetarian ghee or vegetable oil.

Inspirations

Books and Film

Robert E. Howard's Conan stories are the template for sword & sorcery fiction; there will never be another Conan nor a Howard. You can find some of his inimitable stories in ***The Coming of Conan the Cimmerian***.

I was surprised at how literary Fritz Leiber's Lankhmar stories are. I started with ***Swords and Deviltry***. Michael Moorcock's subversive Elric stories—many collected in ***The Chronicle of the Black Sword***—fed me psychedelia. After Howard, these writers and others opened up the space for sword & sorcery.

John Milius's ***Conan the Barbarian*** (1982) handily closed it again. Maybe the genre was already heading that way, but this movie cemented sword & sorcery as a fantasy playground for regressive political views. Despite that, many of its scenes remain indelible.

Meanwhile, ***Clash of the Titans*** (1981) by Desmond Davis and Ray Harryhausen helped me imagine a fantasy world holistically, from Olympus to Tartarus. Harryhausen's Sinbad movies, with all their flaws, also infected my brain when I was little. I never fully recovered from the witch with a seagull's foot.

Princess Mononoke by Hayao Miyazaki shook me out of my personal rut with sword & sorcery. It has many of Conan stories' elements—sword fights, barbarism against civilization, eldritch forces, demons, gods—but it adds cultural specificity and shout-to-the-heavens love.

Then I found gems like ***Sorcerer of the Wildeeps*** by Kai Ashante Wilson, ***Black Gods Kiss*** by Lavie Tidhar (its title an homage to the first Jirel of Joiry story by C.L. Moore), and ***Night's Master*** by Tanith Lee, all of which show sword & sorcery through a queer lens. "New edge" sword & sorcery writers continue to look at the genre with new eyes; you can find many of them in ***New Edge Sword & Sorcery Magazine***: https://newedgeswordandsorcery.com/

N.K. Jemisin's 2018 talk on world-building for Wired25 helped me build a fantasy world—and its systems of oppression—without thoughtlessly recreating the world and systems we already have: www.wired.com/story/nk-jemisin-how-to-write-science-fiction-wired25/

To get some of Conan's sense of an age before history but also ***Princess Mononoke***'s cultural specificity, I reached for ancient Sumer. ***Inanna's Descent into the Nether World***, translated by William R. Sladek, still haunts me. ***The Epic of Gilgamesh***, translated by N. K. Sandars, filled in the story space. ***Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*** by Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat helped make the world physical and real. Sean D'souza also contributed valuable research.

Games

Apocalypse Keys by Rae Nedjadi was the template for most of the mechanics—rolling too high, Doom moves, Crisis, and the Fire Track, including the overall upward doom spiral. Despite all my experimentation with systems, I ended up taking Rae's game practically wholesale.

Rolling too high, it turns out, suits the wildly varying scope of sword & sorcery stories, where characters dare greatly and get in over their heads, sometimes reaching transcendent moments before crashing down to the gritty streets again. Conan in "The Tower of the Elephant" and Fafhrd in "Lean Times in Lankhmar" are just two examples. ***Libreté*** by Vivien Féasson first created the roll-too-high mechanic.

I wanted the Hearts system to feel like an exercise in vulnerability that also keeps you human. I based it on the Strings from ***Thirsty Sword Lesbians*** by April Kit Walsh with elements of the Bonds in ***Apocalypse Keys***. It was important that the player who needs a bonus to their move not be the one who decides whether to spend the Heart. ***Monsterhearts*** by Avery Alder first introduced the Strings mechanic.

“Beseech a Force” is based on “Call on a Toxic Power” in ***Thirsty Sword Lesbians*** but is thematically inspired by Elric and Arioch.

Making a Powered by the Apocalypse game helped me understand how rules, story, and the player experience interact. Thanks to Meguey and Vincent Baker for kicking all that off with ***Apocalypse World***. Following in their footsteps brought me closer to the player experience, and I’ll never think of game design the same way.

The part of classic PbtA I’m least interested in is predefined stats. Reading ***The Iliad*** by Homer (translated by Emily Wilson) and playing ***Agon*** by John Harper and Sean Nittner inspired me to use Epithets. Choosing or inventing your own Epithets lets your adventurer be a true individual. I appreciate all the players who invoke their worst Epithet just because it fits the story.

I borrowed the Palette Grid from ***Seven Part Pact*** by Jay Dragon; her Grid encourages setting boundaries in an ongoing, nuanced, good-faith conversation. ***Journeys through the Radiant Citadel*** by Ajit George, Wesley Schneider, et al., helped me portray a culture not my own. ***Sleepaway*** by Jay Dragon and ***Dream Askew*** by Avery Alder inspired the adventurers’ genders. ***Alien Frontiers*** by Tory Niemann is a great dice-as-worker-placement board game that helped me build the Sorcerer’s spell-casting mechanic. ***Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG*** by Joseph Goodman inspired the Sorcerer’s “Possible Warpings” table.

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Lyla McBeath Fujiwara reeled me in, focused me, and forced me to make progress. If I got a "What would Lyla do?" tattoo, I'd probably finish more games. Rae Nedjadi guided me through many difficult design decisions over a long, crucial period in the game's development. Sean Nittner's generous feedback challenged me to sharpen the game's themes. Avery Alder grounded my many initial ideas with keen insight. Cat Tobin saved me from myself more times than I care to admit. Superstar voice actor and my dear high school friend Yuri Lowenthal bestowed his talent on the Kickstarter video, instantly raising the bar.

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Alexa, A Room of One's Own, Aaron Lim, Aaron Yi, Abha Thakkar, AC @ Mothmind Press, Ace L, Ada Fairweather, Adam and Anise Strong-Morse, Adam Blodgett, Adam Mayes, Adam Rajski, Adriel Wilson, Adrien Kemper, aetlas, Agatha Reitz, Aidan Budd, Ákos Toldi, Alan Chisholm-Turner, Alan Scott, Alex, Alex Holt, Alex Morgan, Alexander Coffman, Alexander Herrera, Alexander van der Raadt, Alexandra Aleck, Alfredo Amatriain, Alix Jackson, Amanda Mullins, Amanda Murray, Amara, Amara Ewell, Amy Tate, Anabel Francisco, Anastasia, Anders Gabrielsson, Andrea, Andrea Klassen, Andrew Dwoinen, Andrew Hartung, Andrew Mauney, Andru Matthews, Angel, Angelo Pileggi, Anja Smith, anna, Anna Lerahk, Anne, Anne O'Nymous, Annie Furlong-Muir, anonajn, anonbeadraws, anonymous1453, anthony, Anthony Gallardo, Anton Ooms, Antonio DoVale, Aphotep, Arakhor, Arcanist, Ari Fodeman, Ari Miller, Ariel Jaffee, Arrow, Arvid Silvmarker, Arwen Kathke, Ash, Ash, Ash Alexander, Ashley DelVillan, Ashley Fiumara, AshtaraSilunar, Ashton West, Asteraceae, atwas, Aura Lily V, Austin S. 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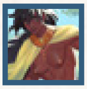
ADEL SOLIANIK THEY/THEM

https://vicious-mongrel.tumblr.com



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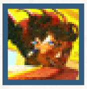
AMITA S/ VOLAPARDUS SHE/HER

https://amitaseve.com



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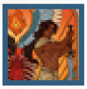
ANNALISE JENSEN

https://www.artstation.com/annalisejensen12324



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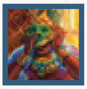
ARTHUR RIEL CABEZAS

https://artiodaktyl.carrd.co



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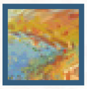

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https://www.instagram.com/hecticelectron

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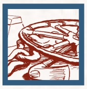

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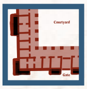

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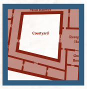

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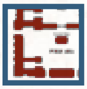

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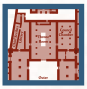

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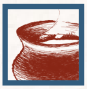

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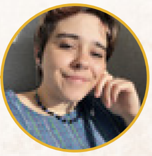
DELAYJIA KENDALL THEY/THEM



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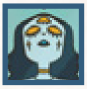
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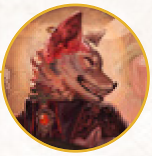

https://www.emorykj.com

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EZRA ROSE THEY/THEM

https://ezra-rose.com

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JAEN NIGHLY BUTLER SHE/HER

https://jnb.art

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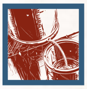
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JAQUELINE FLORENCIO SHE/HER

artstation.com/jaquelineflorencio

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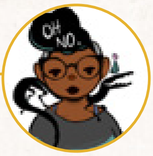
KANESHA C. BRYANT SHE/HER



https://theveryworstthing.tumblr.com

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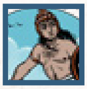
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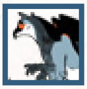
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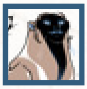
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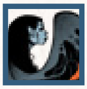
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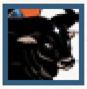
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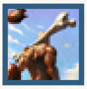
KATA KEMI SHE/THEY

https://katakemi.carrd.co



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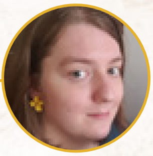
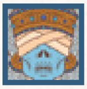


https://www.katrindirimillustration.com



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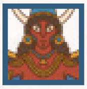

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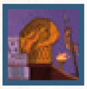
KEV HE/THEY

https://bsky.app/profile/eldritchsmite.bsky.social



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LORNE COLT THEY/HE

https://lornecolt.com

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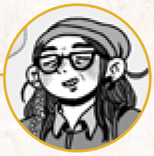

https://sob-comix.com

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ROBBI A. BURNS THEY/THEM

https://www.gossamercoast.com/burns

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SHAN BENNION THEY/THEM

https://anonbeadraws.tumblr.com

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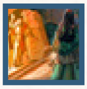
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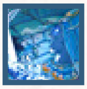
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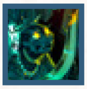
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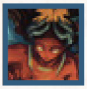
THALIE SHELEN SHE/HER

https://instagram.com/thalie_shelen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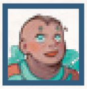
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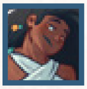
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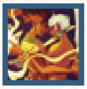
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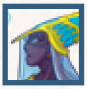
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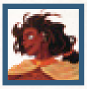
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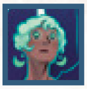
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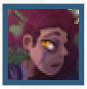
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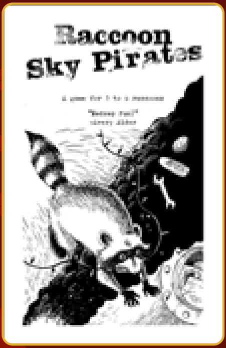
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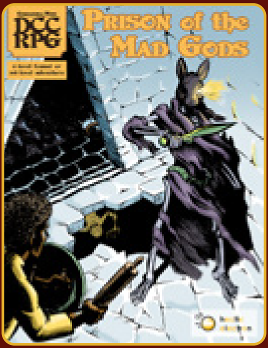
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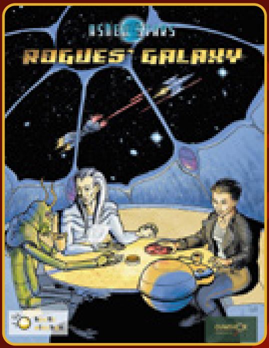
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